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The Inn That Almost Wasn't: The Life and Times of the Len Foote Hike Inn

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The Inn That Almost Wasn't: The Life and Times of the Len Foote Hike Inn

By

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Professional Writing in the Department of English

In the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Kennesaw State University

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College of Humanities & Social Sciences
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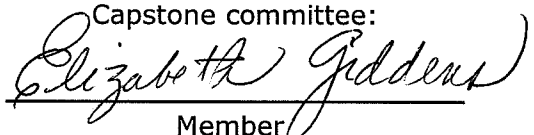
Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of
Jessica Price
Has been approved by the committee
For the capstone requirement for the Master of Arts in
Professional Writing in the Department of English
At the May 2013 graduation

Capstone committee:



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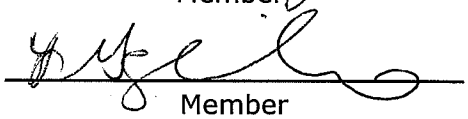

Member

Introduction to Capstone: *The Inn that Almost Wasn't*

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Capstone Committee:

March 30, 2013

Description of Capstone

The following capstone project is a culmination of many smaller projects, countless hours of research, and several of my interests. *The Inn that Almost Wasn't: The Life and Times of the Len Foote Hike Inn* is best described as the biography of a building. Much the same as biographies of people, the story of this building could not be told without intertwining the tales and histories of several people. Though the building itself wasn't opened until 1998, the story begins back in 1972 (though arguably roots were planted much earlier than that). I began the telling of this story in 1972, when then Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter started the Board of Natural Resources. This piece, written about a uniquely designed and creatively managed backcountry lodge, features many environmental "heavy-hitters" in Georgia. Among the featured persons are Leonard Foote (well-known conservationist and member of the Board of Natural Resources), Leonard Ledbetter (former director of Georgia Environmental Protection Division and Georgia Department of Natural Resources), Lonice Barrett (director of Georgia Department of Natural Resources at the time of the inn's opening), Burt Weerts (former director of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites Division), Hillrie Quin (founder of non-profit organization Appalachian Education and Recreation Services), and David Freedman (Chief Engineer at Georgia Department of Natural Resources when inn was built) among many others.

The inn is located at Amicalola Falls State Park in Dawsonville, Georgia. It sits on land originally owned by the U.S. Forest Service but which was traded for by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR) for the sole purpose of building a remote location, off-grid, sustainable lodge. As you will read in the coming pages, the original plan did not happen as anticipated, and as the title states, the inn was almost never built. Though GADNR arranged for the land swap in 1986, construction funds were not available as soon as thought. The building

wasn't fully funded until 1995. The story of this building is truly unique: it contains a series of challenges and triumphs, the creation of partnerships never before tried, and incredible risks taken by passionate people. The man the building was named for was a truly vibrant and unmatched conservationist of his time. Foote was respected by environmentalists, regulators, and industry experts alike. He lived what he preached and was a lover of the outdoors and nature. The cast of characters that are a part of the building's history is packed full of people vital to Georgia's history, success, and conservation efforts, two of whom were recipients of the coveted Rock Howard Award—the highest award given out by GADNR. The building itself is one of a kind. No other facility exists like it in Georgia, and despite efforts on the part of many people who have worked with the inn to locate a similar building in the United States, no one has yet to find a match. Designed as a sustainable backcountry inn with a mission to educate, the inn's own existence is unique enough to justify its own book. The inn has a story to tell. I hope the pages following this introduction do the inn, the people, and its namesake justice.

Looking back now, I'm not really sure if I found this subject or if this subject found me. Either way, my time in the Master of Arts in Professional Writing Program (MAPW) at Kennesaw State University (KSU) led me down the path to write about the Len Foote Hike Inn. I knew of the building's existence before I started the program, but I had never considered taking on a project about it until I became an MAPW student. The story of how I came to write about the Hike Inn all begins when I first applied to the master's program.

Relevance to Program

As a student in the MAPW with a major concentration in applied writing and a minor in creative writing, I have seen myself and my writing skills grow throughout my time at KSU. I applied on a whim. My GRE scores were about to expire, meaning to apply any later than I did

would require a retaking of the test. That, in essence, meant I might not get the same scores. Since I hadn't been in college since 2006, I was worried I wouldn't score as high as I did the first time. Though I work as a technical writer/editor for an engineering firm, I wasn't sure my writing skills in regard to writing compelling text would meet the mark. So apply I did. I must admit to being rather shocked at my acceptance into the program. (I should clarify that my previous statement does not reflect that I took the application process or the program itself lightly. My cavalier attitude was merely a reflection of my confidence at the time, as in "what the heck, I won't get in anyway.") At that point in my life, my son was about a year and a half old. Though I was still new to motherhood, I felt I was completely defined (and valued solely) as a mother. When he was born I decided to stay home and continue to work on a part time basis—only to keep my foot in the door (and a little bit to maintain my own sanity). This change in identity had led to my plummeting confidence as a writer.

My first class with the program was right up my alley—Technical Writing. It was definitely a good choice to start with seeing as I knew something about the subject already. Even so, I found the course challenged me and began my growth as a writer. The course not only made me write more than I was writing on my own, but it made me share my writing with other people. I'm not just talking about the professor now; peer review was also a required component of class. Those two words were enough to set my skin crawling and to give me the overwhelming urge to hide in a dark hole until the process was over. Of course, it wasn't nearly as painful as my subconscious would have me believe. Actually, it was not only enlightening and helpful, but also it served as a confidence boost. People were telling me what they liked about my writing (and it wasn't "nothing") and the areas I need to work on (which wasn't

"everything"). I was facing my fears (other people reading my writing) and surviving. It was much more than I expected to happen when I first decided, "what the heck, I'll just apply."

The precedent set in that first class—that of being challenged, being scared and overcoming my fear—continued throughout all of my classes during this program. Taking a rhetoric and composition class ended up being much scarier than I anticipated, but I persevered (despite being the only class member who was not a Teaching Assistant) and grew during the process. Though I don't plan to become a teacher, I found learning about teaching techniques greatly helped improve my own writing. During the course, I focused my research on the process of revising and the importance of self-editing within the writing process. The class as a whole examined the issue of self-revision in relationship with how to teach students to do it and not hate it. I have to admit, editing my own work was pretty low on my list of things I love about being a writer. So this lesson is one that I continually remind myself of as I complete new projects. My research on the subject of revision has changed my attitude about the process. I wouldn't say it has become my favorite part of writing, but I have learned to enjoy the process and see the creativity involved in self-revision. Of course, there was also more peer review—every class had this aspect—and each time I cringed a little less at the two words.

Other courses surprised me—like my social media class. While we read many academic and rhetorical writings about social media (I didn't even know this area of research existed), we also created and maintained a class Wiki (another first) and participated online and in the classroom. Our in-class discussions were riveting. I had no idea there were so many aspects to social media—wasn't it just blogs and Facebook?—and the cultural impacts of it were astounding. For this class I focused on mommyblogs—and what an eye-opening experience. First, mommyblogs are really radical and are combatting media-portrayed Supermom images

with more realistic versions of motherhood. Second, I could completely relate to mommybloggers' feelings and their need for a public outlet (and not just a personal journal that no one else could read). Third, I had to re-examine my own views and definitions of motherhood. I even became a feminist (and I didn't even have to burn my bras). To say this class changed me would be an understatement. To say it only changed me as a writer would be downright wrong.

While some classes challenged me because they were out of my realm, other classes challenged me by pushing me further in my field. The writing about the environment class I took last spring semester is a perfect example. During this class, my capstone project was born, though I didn't realize it at the time. In the course, I read books (novels and non-fiction), essays, and excerpts by various writers about Southern history, environment, nature, and the human relationship to nature. As a self-proclaimed outdoors writer, this course was right up my alley. My final project was about the Len Foote Hike Inn and encompassed a memoir-esque travel writing essay about my experience hiking to the lodge and a non-fiction blog entry describing the inn and its sustainable features. I fell in love in this class. I became completely enamored with writing about two things—the Hike Inn and nature. It became clear that I had to keep writing about both, and thus was born my capstone project. But that is not all I gained from this class. I was taking this class in concurrence with the social media course. Reading Carolyn Merchant's eco-feminist philosophies and studying mommyblogs led to a paper titled "Hello World, it's me Eve: Creating Interruption by Introducing Eve to Web 2.0 through a Mommyblog." That paper led to two presentations: one at the Southern Humanities Council and the other at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. (Here I must stop again to emphasize how big of a deal this was. My writing was accepted in conferences, and I had to get up in front of people I

didn't know and read it. If you haven't accepted how much I grew in this program up until now, these two points should prove it.)

At the risk of sounding like a late-night infomercial: but wait there's more! My social media and writing for the environment class also led to publications. I wrote one article on Wade Chandler, the lodge manager and the Hike Inn and one on social media and technology usage on the trail—both published in the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's magazine *Journeys*. The social media class wiki led to a collaborative publication with three other classmates that will appear in Computers and Composition Online this fall. I also continued to grow my project on the Hike Inn and further explored this topic in my classes on rhetorical grammar and writing book proposals. The latter class convinced me this project was worthy of a book and that I was worthy to write it.

Throughout the year when I first started researching the Hike Inn for my environmental writing class until today, I have logged in hundreds of hours of research and interviews. I have written and revised and re-written and re-revised. I have interviewed key players in the inn's history, tracked down people who might know something or someone, and visited the park office, the GADNR and the Hike Inn itself. I have learned and grown and written and written and written. It has been challenging and scary, fascinating and unquestionably rewarding.

Importance to Audience/Cultural Significance

Until now, I have shown why I care so deeply about this project. I have described why it matters to me and why I chose it. What I have yet to prove is why it should matter to you or anyone else. I mean, a remote location lodge in the middle of the forest up on a mountain can't matter that much to the world, right? And maybe, unlike me, you aren't an outdoors lover and this inn is not the kind of place you would ever imagine going to. I am fully aware that not

everyone shares my passion for being in nature, and certainly some people view nature and enjoy nature in different ways than I do. And though I know that not everyone will visit the Hike Inn, I fully believe that everyone should hear its story. Whether you enjoy nature from afar or feel at peace when amongst the trees, you can learn lessons from the tale the inn has to share.

Being a nature nut is not a prerequisite for reading this piece or learning something from it. Even some very vocal environmental activists didn't spend the majority of their time in nature. Journalist, writer, feminist, and environmentalist, Marjory Stoneman Douglas is most well known for her influential book *The Everglades: River of Grass* (1947). She spent her life defending the fragile ecosystem of the Everglades, campaigning against its misuse and abuse. Yet she admitted visiting the Everglades rarely and preferring to admire it from afar. In her autobiography, she writes, "To be a friend of the Everglades is not necessarily to spend time wandering around out there. It's too buggy, too wet, too generally inhospitable" (Douglas, 1987). Her view of the importance of nature is more about balance. Jack Davis describes her beliefs of nature's connection to city life in his essay in *Environmental History*: "She recognized that urban life was inextricably linked to the extra-urban, that Miami's existence was dependent on its rural hinterland. As the Everglades go, protected or destroyed, so go the sustaining elements of human life" (Davis, 2003).

This same philosophy of interdependence and balance can be applied to the importance of the Hike Inn. The inn's story serves as an example of how people and the environment can exist in harmony with each other. Though the Hike Inn was designed and built to have minimal impact on the land, some more intrusive methods had to be employed for the inn to be built. As you will read, though the original plan for the inn was for it to be completely off grid and for water to be pulled from a mountain stream, due to cost and difficulties with logistics the plan had

to be abandoned. Instead, a well was built and electrically was brought in. These methods, though not the ideal, were employed with as much care for the environment as possible. The electrical line was brought up the mountain underground to provide less impact on the mountain, the wildlife, and the view of "undisturbed" nature. Another deviation from the original plan was the need to remove some rock and trees to widen the service road to the inn so that trucks could bring supplies and workers in during construction. Though the team examined other methods of building the inn (including using helicopters to drop supplies), they decided minimal rock and tree removal was necessary since other methods were strictly cost prohibitive.

These deviations from the mission to be completely sustainable and undisruptive to the land around the inn did not affect the team's desire to maintain sustainable practices as much as possible. Though on grid, the facility uses as many means as possible to reduce dependence on electrical power. Automatic lights in the buildings sense when people are present and turn off when no one is using the facility. The design of the inn also maximizes sunlight so that lighting facilities during the day is not necessary with electricity. The composting toilets use no water, thus conserving the inn's well. Solar panels capture the sun's rays and are used to augment electricity whenever possible. Rain barrels catch water runoff from the roofs, and the water is then used for the gardens during dry seasons. At the inn, guests will find not one trash can. The staff of the inn ensures guests are aware of the "pack-it-in/pack-it-out policy" so that any trash produced by the guests is their responsibility. This policy is one of the many ways the inn strives to teach guests to be aware of their impact on the environment.

The inn's environmental mission also echoes Douglas' stance on balance. During nightly tours, staff of the inn teach guests about the inner sustainable workings of the lodge. Staff members introduce guests to the inn's red wiggler worms that act as composting agents thus

reducing the inn's production of trash and, therefore, it's impact on landfills. Though the inn's staff does encourage guests to think creatively about their effects on the environment and what changes they can make in their own lives, they offer very pragmatic and balanced advice. Not everyone can or will start a worm composting project at home, but the staff says, everyone can be more conscientious about recycling "trash" and about not wasting food. By eating everything on your plate (as the inn encourages with every meal), you make sure that the energy put into growing, processing and transporting your food is not wasted. Likewise, not everyone can or will go out and install rain barrels after they leave the inn, but everyone can be more careful about conserving water—by taking shorter showers, turning off the faucet when brushing your teeth, or only running the dishwasher/washing machine with a full load. It's these practical messages and lessons to heighten awareness that are vital for everyone to hear. The inn teaches us all, nature lovers and city dwellers alike, that we can work with nature and that living in a partnership is easier than it sounds and important to the environment, wildlife and humankind.

Another important component of my project is the collection and documentation of personal narratives and oral histories. Though GADNR and the park service had records of the inn's construction, much of the heart of its story comes not from the budget reports or contract compliance documents but from the minds and hearts of the men and women who worked so hard to make it a reality. Up until this project, no one had documented the stories of the people most heavily involved in the inn's vision, construction and operation. Many people wanted the inn's history to be documented but no one had yet found the time to do it. I was honored to fill this role, and I truly feel it was vital to happen at this time. Many of the people involved in the inn are now in their later years of life. Some have already passed away. Without this project, I fear the stories of these heroes of the inn would have been lost forever.

As the title of my project suggests, the life and times of the inn are depicted and vitally important to its tale. Though admittedly cliché, this title accurately describes the genre of the book and the book's importance to society. As Portelli describes in *Oral History as a Genre*, "Oral history shifts between performance-oriented narrative and content-oriented document, between subject-oriented life story and theme-oriented testimony. In practice, oral history stays mostly in between: its role is precisely to connect life to times, uniqueness to representativeness, as well as orality to writing. The key word in life and times is the one in the middle" (1997). As with oral histories, this project aims to balance the individual efforts and lives of the people involved in the inn (as well as the inn's "life" itself) with the overarching culture and society at the time. As such, background stories about the culture of Georgia and the United States in general is interwoven within the pages and tales of individuals.

Today, sustainability is a household term. We talk of "green" products, "green" buildings, even "green" people. But these words were not so common when the idea of the Hike Inn was first announced. Even during the inn's construction in 1998, "green" building was not a term yet invented. Though recognized for its sustainable design, sustainable build, and sustainable operation after it had been opened for six years, the team working on the inn did not build the lodge with this goal in mind. The team wanted a sustainable inn because they believed in conservation and sustainable practices. Despite the lack of popularity of sustainable buildings at the time and despite the hardships this practice created, the team persevered and pushed through the challenge because they felt it was the right thing to do. They named the inn to honor a true conservationist—a man who stood up for his beliefs in conservation and who lived a life true to simplicity and sustainability. He was a lover of nature and wildlife and he showed his love in his actions every day.

I hope you find this book represents the true nature of the inn that it is written about. The inn stands quietly in the woods and offers guests an easy passage to enjoy nature and commune with the wilderness and each other. It stands as a subtle example that living a responsible, sustainable life is easier than it seems sometimes. It shows how every person can find a balance and live a unique life without combating nature. It offers a clear model of how we can form a partnership with the environment around us and how we can lead others by living a life of example. There is no guilt, no brow-beating, no harsh tactics. The inn brings people to nature and nature to people in a calm, practical, relaxing manner. With this book, I hope you glimpse that feeling and whether you choose the Marriott or a backcountry lodge for your next vacation, I hope you learn a few lessons from the inn that almost wasn't.

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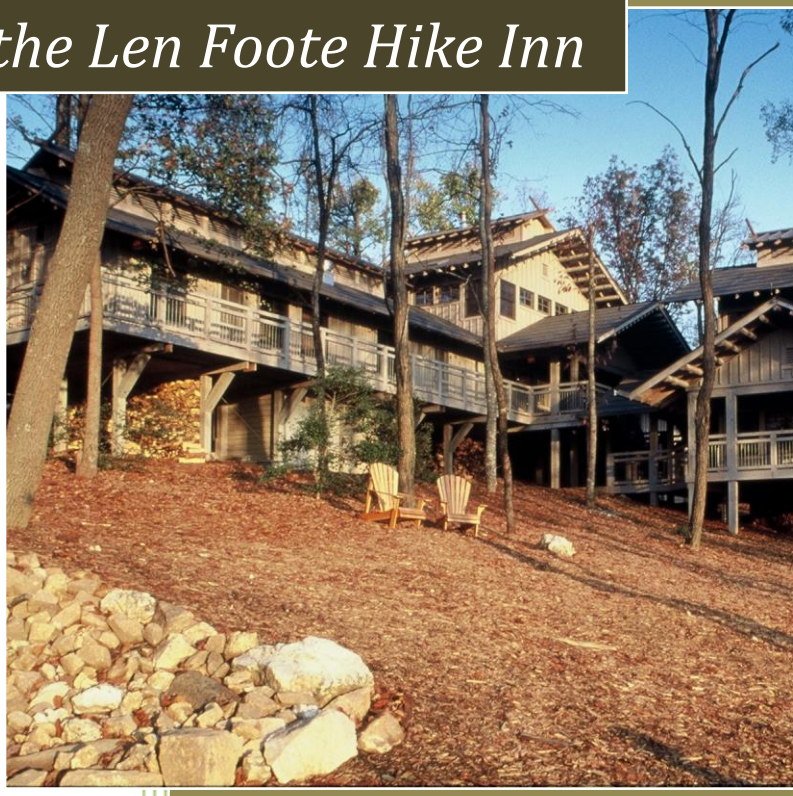
The Inn that Almost Wasn't:

The Life and Times of the Len Foote Hike Inn



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Contents

Abbreviations

A.T.	Appalachian Trail
AERS	Appalachian Education and Recreation Services
AMC	Appalachian Mountain Club
ATC	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
EB	Existing Buildings
EPD	Environmental Protection Division
FAIA	Fellow of the American Institute of Architects
GADNR	Georgia Department of Natural Resources
GATC	Georgia Appalachian Trail Club
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
NAHB	National Association of Home Builders
USBC	U.S. Green Building Council
USFS	U.S. Forest Service

Introduction: At the End of the Trail

I've been here before. I've walked this trail, crossed this stream, gazed at this view. And though the trail, the streams, and the view have not changed much, much is different. Four years have passed since I last made this journey. Though the years have brought many changes to my life, I know the inn at the end of the trail will be same. And that I love.

Hiking to lodge with friends in 2008

My pack is strapped on my back, and I am heading up the trail with my husband and our two-year-old son, who is riding contently on his daddy's back. It is March 2012 and unseasonably warm. The last time I treaded this path was in January of 2008—my boots crunching on icy snow, my hands tingling with pain numbly frozen to my hiking poles, the water freezing solid in my Nalgene bottle offering no respite from my thirst. This trip, I am in shorts and a t-shirt, wishing I had remembered a rag to wipe away the sweat before it mercilessly drips into my eyes. My water tastes like hot tea that someone forgot to put a teabag in. Looking up through the canopy of leaves at the light blue sky and cottony clouds, I exhale, releasing tension with each breath. As we forge up the trail, I forget the stresses of city life: meeting deadlines, cleaning the house, and paying the bills. Instead, I soak up the smell of blooming flowers and let my eyes scan for signs of scurrying squirrels or flittering birds.

March 2012 hike with husband and son

On this hike, I remind myself that the Len Foote Hike Inn almost never happened. This trail almost led nowhere. Woven with stories of challenges and triumphs, of failures and victories, and of plans made and dreams lost, the inn's history is a unique tale. Knowing that the lodge almost didn't exist, that it doesn't sit in the original location chosen, that so many people fought so hard to make this dream a reality—makes me appreciate the journey that much more.

Along the trail, we keep an eye out for wildflowers. The inn's namesake, Len Foote, would have noticed them. A biologist, botanist, author, conservationist, photographer, husband, father, and great friend, Foote was, as Lonice Barrett recalls, "a true outdoorsman." With a bachelor's degree in forestry and wildlife management and a master's degree in ecology, Foote was a highly-respected resource for environmental issues in Georgia. At the time of his death, he was working to map the geologic regions in the state, an activity that he characterized as a great form of exercise in the winter months. He also lived what he preached. Friend and co-worker Leonard Ledbetter recalls that Foote and his wife built a small, rustic home in Waleska, Georgia. It had only two rooms: a bedroom and a great room. Heated by a wood-burning stove and cooled by fans alone, his house shared many sustainable features that the Hike Inn touts today. He had a small lake and a large garden, and he lived a simple life. His passion was photographing wildflowers.

And so on my hike, I think of him. I stop to photograph tiny lavender blooms along the trail. Could this be a patch of dwarf crested iris or *iris cristata*? White, lacy flowers catch

my eye—star chickweed? *Stellaria pubera*? If only I knew more about the small wonders lining my path. Wishing I had a better eye for the surrounding flora, I notice I'm in a classic Foote pose: backpack on, camera in hand, one knee gently resting on the ground. Then I realize my husband and son are out of sight, and I run to catch up.

We are not completely alone on our hike, which is not surprising considering we are on one of the most popular mountain trails in North Georgia. One older couple keeps crossing our path, as if we are engaged in an unspoken game of follow the leader and we keep switching positions. Seeing our son humming along in his backpack carrier, they remark how he has the best seat in the house. We laugh then ask if this is their first trip to the Hike Inn. They say no. The man says he's been trying to remember how many times they've been there. He thinks a bit longer. "Maybe five or six," he says. "We're just taking our time and enjoying the hike," he tells us as they step aside to let us go by. "We're just trying to get there before it rains or our son decides he's done riding," my husband responds. The man's wife looks at me and softly says that she just hopes they make it without him having a heart attack. Then the man whispers to my husband that they're going slow because his wife just had foot surgery. Either way, racing to the inn would defeat the purpose of the trail, because the trail is not just a road to the inn. It is, in essence, an extension of the inn.

Approaching the Hike Inn (look between the two larger trees in the middle—you can just barely make out the roofline of the inn)

As we approach the Hike Inn and I get my first glimpse of it through the trees, I smile. I smile because the lodge seems to grow

organically from the mountain. I smile because I have made it the past five miles through uphills and downhills, stream crossings and switchbacks. I smile because a part of my journey is over and another part is just beginning. And I smile because I know that whenever my next visit here will be, I will still see the same thing.

Pavilion entrance to the Len Foote Hike Inn

Even after stopping for a light lunch along the trail, we arrive after only two and a half hours. The sign leading to the inn states average hiking time is three hours. Carrying our two-year-old son in a pack (for the longest hike we had ever tried) we assume would delay us. Dropping our packs and unbuckling our son, we decide to lounge in the porch swing, try out the Adirondack chairs, and watch our son scamper around, enjoying his freedom and exploring his new environment. A young boy, roughly ten years old, comes running through the breezeway. He's barefoot and appears to be on a mission of some importance. My son takes immediate notice and asks, "Where'd that boy go?" as soon as he is gone.

We wander inside, leaving our packs resting against the chairs under the pavilion. We are greeted by a somewhat scruffy, dark-haired young man who is standing behind an all-wood, lacquered counter and grinning warmly. He welcomes us to the Hike Inn, asks our names, and checks us off his list. Unlike an in-town hotel that might not be concerned about guests who fail to arrive, the Hike Inn staff must keep tabs of anyone that checks in at the visitors' center and fails to make it to the inn. He says his name is Wade and hands me two bags with our linens and towels and a key attached to a wooden block with the number two

burned into it. When I turn around, I see my son snuggled up to a woman I've never met. "I see you've found a friend already," I comment to my son. The woman smiles and introduces herself as Robin. She says her boy is out running around. "I believe we've met him," I laugh.

Heading to our rooms, we grab our packs and walk just two doors down from the main office. I had tried to warn my husband before we got here that the rooms were small, but I guess he wasn't fully prepared. "Now this is rustic," he says when he steps inside. We begin unpacking—hanging up our jackets on wooden dowels sticking out from the wall, placing diapers on the small shelf, and stacking clean clothes in the cubby. I quickly claim the top bunk, a privilege I was often denied in childhood, and examine the thin mattress where I'd be sleeping that night. "Looks comfy," my husband smirks.

Looking into our room through the screen door

A single photograph serves as the room's only decor. The long-stemmed white flower is a *Lobelia siphilitica*, as the caption describes. Each room in the Hike Inn displays a different picture of a wildflower, all taken by Foote. In fact, reminders of Foote are all around us at the inn. In the main lobby, there's a picture of Foote in his classic pose, a framed copy of the Mark Trail comic strip, which Foote inspired, a glass case featuring his three books, and a backpack just like he used hanging above the door. And if all the subtle references to Foote go unnoticed, guests will learn about him on the tour.

Every day at 5 pm, guests are offered an insider's glimpse into the inn's history and daily operation. Tonight, Wade begins the tour in the front office, and he starts by asking where everyone lives. We hear various locations around Georgia—Dallas, Decatur, Kennesaw, Atlanta—but many came from out of state as well—mostly Florida and Alabama. One young couple has come from Munich, Germany, and has with them their seven-month-old baby girl, who is cooing and crawling around during Wade's opening speech.

Wade welcomes everyone to the Len Foote Hike Inn, his native Georgia drawl at once apparent. He points out the pictures of Foote on the wall and shares some of the inn's namesakes' key achievements. Wade also explains we are sitting on an island. In essence, we are on a 120-acre state park island, surrounded by land owned by the U.S. Forest Service. In fact, he says, "Most of today, ya'll hiked through U.S. Forest Service land." Trail signs prove this fact; we knew we were close to the inn when we passed a sign on the trail stating we were on state park land again.

Though the Hike Inn is owned by the Georgia State Parks, Wade says, "I'm not a ranger." He wears a shirt that simply states, "Hike Inn." Instead, Wade works for a non-profit organization that manages the inn for the state. Wade leads us outside, down the steps towards the next tiered building, the bathhouse, but instead of going into that building, we veer down more steps to the native garden area. On the hill above us is the bunkhouse with guest rooms and beside us is the bathhouse. Lining the gravel walkway are bloodroot (*sanguinaria Canadensis*), St. John's Wort (*Hypericum punctatum*), and green and gold

(*chrysogonum Virginianum*).[1] Wade explains that all the plants here are native species, and because they are native to the area, they require little maintenance and upkeep. These plants are also rescues; they would have been uprooted or paved over if not saved by the Georgia Native Plant Society and relocated here. Foote would be proud. In *Gardening with Native Wildflowers*, Foote and co-author Samuel Jones write, "We hope to discredit the erroneous notion that the cultivation of wild flowers is a complicated and difficult process, or that natives are scraggly and unattractive." The lush, flowery garden surrounding us and Wade's comment on its ease of upkeep disprove such a myth.

If I had to name a star of the native plant garden, I would say it is the lone hemlock tree standing roughly 20 feet tall in the center of the area. Wade explains that hemlock trees in Georgia aren't easy to find these days due to the infestation of a non-native invasive insect, the hemlock woolly adelgid. "At least," he clarifies, "you won't see many hemlocks this tall in the wild." Without treatment to prevent the bug, hemlocks die a slow but inevitable death. The adelgid attaches itself to the base of the hemlock's needles and begins feasting on the tree's starches. Without these essential nutrients, the hemlock can produce no new growth and typically dies within five to ten years. GADNR and USFS work with non-profit organizations such as Save Georgia's Hemlocks to

The hemlock in the native plant garden of the Hike Inn is the large tree on the left.

[1] My untrained eye has not gained any magical powers at the Hike Inn, but I am confidently able to identify these plant species thanks to signage in the garden.

treat trees on public lands. Without these programs, the hemlocks would be on quick path to extinction.

Our group meanders down a small rock path with railroad ties for steps to what is known as Star Base. At first glance, guests might see this area as an excellent viewing spot with several oddly placed boulders, an upside-down rock V with a hole in the apex, and a small, shallow cave. In reality, it's a calendar, though as Wade points out, it can only tell the date on two days of the year—fall and spring equinoxes. On those two special days, the sun shines through a hole in the rocks projecting a starburst of light into the small cave behind it. (A picture of this phenomenon hangs above the door in the front office.) Any other day of the year and the rocks make great seating (or climbing apparatuses, as my son shows us). The stones also serve as a compass, marking north, northeast, east, southeast, and south.

Star Base

We follow Wade up the rock path and past the door to the dining room into a small room under the bunkhouse. Guests who miss this voluntary treat (the tour is not a mandatory lesson) don't ever see this part of the Hike Inn. In what looks and smells like a cellar with long wooden tables, we meet some less seen "staff" of the inn. These red, three-inch long, wiggly lovers of darkness do their part in maintaining a sustainable inn in the mountains. Wade pulls back a tarp revealing

white strips of shredded paper mixed with a deep black soil. An earthy aroma permeates the air. Fed a diet of office paper and kitchen scraps, these worms reduce the inn's waste while producing nutrient-rich compost for the inn's gardens. It's a win-win (and since the worms are often the highlight of the guest tour—it's a win-win-win).

Wade re-covers the hungry worms and points to the wide fiberglass tank in the back of the room. "This is a composting toilet," he proudly states. The Hike Inn does not use traditional plumbed toilets, but these are not typical outhouses. Besides the fact that there's no need to flush (and a slight up-draft breeze), the toilets look like many regular facilities, seat and all. Wade shows us the two pipes attached to the top of the tank: the large pipe in the center is for "deposits" and the other pipe that enters at a diagonal is for the ventilation system so that the facilities don't smell like an outhouse either. Wade offers a warning though, "Be careful what you drop in the toilets." He welcomes anyone brave enough to fish out their lost valuables from the tanks, but quickly says he will not be going in himself.

As our tour comes to an end, Wade reminds us that dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and tells us that our waste goal for the night is one ounce or less. He explains that the old adage our mothers told us about eating all the food on our plate isn't just about wasting money. "Think about all the energy that was used to grow the food, transport it here and cook it," Wade explains. Eating all your food is conservation. And if that isn't incentive enough, Wade tell us, we can earn a smiley face on the board if we don't exceed our food waste limit.

Our group slowly dissipates, but guests don't all scatter to separate areas. Many have befriended others and are now chatting about where they live, what they do, what brought them to the Hike Inn. My husband and I follow our son, who is following Robin's son. The

boys scout for bullfrogs in the small, murky pond between the bathhouse and the dining room. Soon, we find ourselves watching for frogs too.

When the dinner bell sounds, we make our way into the dining room and find seats at the end of a long wooden, picnic-style table. Across from us are Robin and her son. Next to us are a retired army man and his wife. A father and his son sit at the far end. Chatter and laughter fill the room as large bowls and platters of food are passed around the table. It feels more like Thanksgiving at a friend's house than dinner at a hotel. Many people ask for second helpings of the sliced pork, mashed potatoes, and fresh steamed carrots, squash, broccoli. We still leave room for the vanilla pound cake. Not a hungry hiker could be found that evening.

At dinner, Robin tells us about her volunteer work with the Hike Inn. Though she is technically here on vacation, Robin has intermittently been getting up to help bus tables or bring out more food. She excitedly describes her latest project. A hobbyist geocacher, Robin was the perfect match for the inn's newest mission—mapping all the hemlock trees on its 120 acres. Having the GPS coordinates will help staff members keep better tabs on the protected evergreens.

Wade reappears after dinner and asks us to say thank you to the kitchen staff, Cathy and Jennifer. We all clap for them. Announcements after dinner include two birthdays and one anniversary.

After-dinner activities are many, though screenless, wireless, and technology free: playing board games in the sunrise room, finding a nice quiet spot to read a book, walking the grounds and admiring the view, getting to know fellow guests, or listening to the evening

presentation. Tonight, Wade is talking about his thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.), a fitting presentation since we are only four and a half miles from Springer Mountain, the official southern terminus of the A.T. As Wade clicks through awe-inspiring photographs of the various scenes and wildlife he encountered, he tells us he learned many valuable lessons on the trail, like throwing rocks at bears is not a good idea and no matter what anyone says Virginia is not flat. His informal talk was often interrupted by questions from guests. One asked, "Did you sleep in the shelters?" Wade laughed and said no way: "Mosquitoes will pick you up and tote you off." Another guest pipes up, "Weren't you scared hiking alone?" Wade shakes his head and says thru-hikers are such a close knit group on the trail that "everybody takes care of everybody." Many people hang around after Wade finishes talking. Some are sharing their own stories and others are asking Wade more specific questions regarding his equipment. With a yawning two-year-old in tow, we retire soon after the presentation ends.

The rooms in the Hike Inn do not have alarm clocks (or any clock for that matter). Guests awake by their internal clocks or by the sound of a drum tapping outside their door. The Hike Inn's lowest tiered building, the Sunrise room, faces east and offers a perfect venue for witnessing spectacular bursts of color as the sun rises over the mountains and trees. So that no guest will miss the "show," a staff member walks around the porch surrounding the bunkhouse while tapping a drum lightly on mornings promising a colorful display. This morning, no drum is played, and we rise to a heavy fog. A hearty

breakfast is served, fueling us for the hike back, though not all guests are leaving. Robin and her son will be heading out, as will the couple from Germany. A group of men are heading to Springer Mountain to camp for the night. The older couple we met on the trail is expecting the arrival of their eight kids and eight grandkids along with a couple of friends, for a total party of 20 ready to celebrate the man's birthday. We're sorry to miss it.

As guests clean their rooms, stripping their beds and sorting dirty linen and towels, they exchange more than common pleasantries. An older man wishes the young couple from Germany safe travels to Asheville, their next destination. Others hug, saying, "keep in touch," "good luck with your job search," "happy birthday," or simply a sincere "it was great meeting you." Witnessing this spectacle of departing hikers, I see how easily people can bond in just one night, and I know this is not just because we are in a remote location. It's because we've all hiked the same trail to get here. We've all left our phones out of reach, opting instead to chat with one another and commune with nature. We've shared meals, stories, and one foggy sunrise. We've bonded in ways not possible at the Holiday Inn. Hoisting our packs on our backs, my husband and I turn as if in choreographed unison to look once more at the inn. Smiling to each other, we head back down the trail.

Gently perched atop a mountain in the Chattahoochee National Forest there stands a cabin like no other. As a ballerina on her toes seems weightless, exerting no pressure on the stage below her, so this cabin seems to rest on the mountain imposing no strain on its terrain. For 15 years this cabin or, rather, lodge, has welcomed weary hikers, whispering its tale to those willing to listen. This is it's story.

Chapter 1: Conception

Amicalola Falls

Amicalola Falls has captured the eyes and hearts of many people throughout the years. Known as "Um Ma Calo La" by the resident Cherokee tribes that first settled there, the "tumbling waters" have provided beauty and resources to early settlers, Civil War soldiers, and nature lovers. The 729-foot high cascade of water is the highest waterfall east of the Mississippi River and is known today as one of Georgia's Seven Wonders. When William Williamson first surveyed the land in 1832, he wrote: "In the course of my route in the mountains, I discovered a waterfall, perhaps the greatest in the world, the most majestic scene I have ever witnessed or heard of."

The land surrounding the falls was first recorded to be owned by Bartley Crane, who settled in the area in 1852 and reportedly married a six-foot tall Cherokee woman named Elizabeth "Kizzer" Brock, who was known for chugging whiskey and carrying a double-barreled shotgun. Though much of the land surrounding the falls stayed in the family for decades, the falls itself was lost when Crane used it as collateral for a loan. The state then sold the falls to an undisclosed party for $2.65, the amount the sheriff's office spent in advertising. Son of Bartely and Elizabeth, John Hunter "Hunt" Crane, was able to buy back some of the land his father lost, and it was Hunt who sold the land to the State of Georgia for use as a state park in 1940. At the time, the park was 407 acres and the falls was, of course, the main attraction for visitors. Campgrounds at the base of the falls were already established

and popular—first used by early settlers for religious revival services, then by both Union and Confederate soldiers as mustering grounds, and eventually as established cabins rented out to visitors wanting some time in nature.

When the state parks service officially bought the land in 1940 and made Amicalola Falls State Park Georgia's twelfth state park, visitors were already familiar with the attraction. The state went right to work to make the falls more accessible and safe for guests. Previously, the falls could be reached only by traversing a rugged footpath, but the state, using convict labor, soon built two surface roads—one leading to the bottom of the falls, the other to the top. The state also added a lake at the top of the falls, which was stocked with trout for recreational fishing. Though the lake was used and loved by many visitors, its life was fairly short. In 1971, a graduate student from the University of Georgia studied the lake and its earthen dam for his thesis and determined that the lake was a hazard. The park ranger at the time agreed with the report, even though a change wasn't made until tragedy struck. In 1977, the Kelly Barnes Dam, located above Toccoa Falls in northeast Georgia (approximately 70 miles east of Amicalola Falls), broke free and flooded the area below. Thirty-nine people died in the resulting flood. It was then that the state began seriously looking at the integrity of other Georgia dams. Amicalola Falls Lake was quickly drained.

Luckily, the park still had great appeal because of the beauty of the falls. The campground and cabins at the base of the falls afforded visitors a place to stay while enjoying the area. The park also had one other unique feature: the Appalachian Trail (A.T.). In 1958, the southern terminus of the

A.T. was moved from Mount Oglethorpe to Springer Mountain.[2] An eight-mile path from the Amicalola Falls visitors' center to the top of Springer Mountain was blazed. An official plaque dedicating the start of the A.T. at the center was built in 1977. Thousands of hikers come to the park each year to begin the 2,100-plus-mile[3] hike from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. But the falls, the campgrounds, and the A.T. would not be the last major improvements made to the park.

An Idea Is Born

In 1972, then Governor Jimmy Carter decided to create the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GADNR), which included the Board of Natural Resources, to address the overwhelming environmental issues the state faced. Namely, the board was created to help enact federal legislation requiring states to provide citizens clean air and clean water.[4] Until then, many industries discharged their "waste" directly into the streams, creeks and rivers nearby. Sewage from cities and counties were piped to the edge of town and then allowed to run free to be absorbed into the soil or nearby waterways. The color of carpet the Dalton, Georgia, factories were producing that week determined the color of the local streams—red, blue or green. The need for environmental legislation was clear, and the state answered the need by creating a board of well-respected conservationists and environmentalists to offer guidance on the effective implementation of the new laws. Joe Tanner was appointed Commissioner of the newly created Department of Natural Resources, which oversaw the

[2] The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club proposed this change in the A.T.'s terminus based on the development and commercialization of the original location on Mount Oglethorpe. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy accepted its proposal in order to maintain the mission of the A.T.
[3] The exact mileage of the A.T. changes from year-to-year based on minor trail re-routes and improvements.
[4] The Clean Air Act was signed in 1970 and amendments to the Clean Water Act were put into effect in 1972.

Board of Natural Resources. For the Board, Governor Carter selected Leonard Foote to serve as the committee chair.

Foote was a biologist, botantist, and conservationist. He authored several articles, wrote textbooks for the University of Georgia, and co-authored guidebooks on local wildflowers and plants. Throughout his career he received numerous awards for his contributions to Georgia's environment including Georgia Wildlife Federation's Wildlife Conservationist of the year in 1967 and Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Rock Howard Award in 1988, the highest award given by the department. His selection for the committee was obvious, and he soon rose to become a leader on the newly created board.

In 1975, the Georgia Heritage Trust Act was passed. The program sent state agents "out to evaluate lands and sights and environmental areas and management areas all over Georgia that the state would consider purchasing," explained GADNR employee, Lonice Barrett. The team was interested in lands that had "natural characteristics, special historical value, or particular recreational value," according to the act's language. Barrett says Foote accompanied the team on many field evaluations. In fact, Foote successfully championed the state's purchase of $20 million in state wildlife management areas. According to Leonard Ledbetter, former director of GADNR and Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD), user fees were increased to fund the purchase of 60,000 acres so that taxpayers were not accountable for covering the expense. With the help of the Georgia Botanical Society, Foote also saved a large stand of yellow lady slippers (*Cypripedium calceolus*) by convincing the state to reroute the projected course of the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway. The patch of native orchids still stands today. Fellow board member, Don Carter represents the sentiments of Foote's co-workers, "Len was the most outstanding person we had on the

board." Carter remembers Foote writing numerous letters to board members on environmental issues he wanted the board to address and says, "I don't remember anybody disagreeing with anything that he wanted to do because he thoroughly researched it before he would do it." Foote's knowledge, passion, and dedication to the environment made him a force people paid close attention to.

Foote became the state's go-to man on any environmental concern. Ledbetter recalls how Foote took the lead in solving a deer population issue during the 1980s. Biologist Charlie Killmaster describes Georgia's deer population during this time: "By 1986, the deer population doubled to almost one million deer and was quite possibly larger than it was prior to European settlement. With such a substantial increase in deer, the population could sustain higher levels of harvest." Plus, the booming deer population was wreaking havoc on Georgia's environment. Farmers were complaining, and motorists were being injured and killed in deer-car collisions. The surviving deer population was sickly from malnourishment. Georgia's diminished deer population of the 1920s gave way to overpopulation in the 1980s through restocking and wildlife management efforts. In short, the state couldn't sustain the current deer population.

Foote and Ledbetter teamed up to get the word out about the deer herd. Conferences held across the state addressed the issue and the proposed solution to the problem. Until then, hunters were limited to harvesting only two deer a year, and only bucks were fair game. To thin the herd to a reasonable level, the state amended the rule so that hunters could harvest three bucks a year, plus one doe. As Ledbetter states, "If I had gone out as an engineer and said we need to start shooting doe, all hell would have broken loose, but Foote goes out and explains it at some public hearings and the media starts saying, 'yeah, we gotta do that.'"

Foote's calm demeanor paired with his unmatched knowledge of nature made him well-respected not only within the GADNR but publicly as a true conservationist. He knew the woods, and if he said something had to be done to protect the environment, people listened.

The 1980s also brought on many changes to the state parks service. Parks were growing and becoming more established. Throughout the 1970s, park rangers were unofficial representatives interested in the well-being of the parks and the parks' guests. Chief Historian Billy Townsend writes, "In 1977, the first group of State Park and Historic Site Superintendents attended the three-month long formal basic training at the Police Academy required of GADNR conservation rangers. In the 1980s more-and-more managers were formally trained until there was one, or more, trained law enforcement officer at almost all of the Parks and Historic Sites." This more formal establishment of parks services also led to interest in making the parks a vacation destination, and not just an area with a lake and a few hiking trails. At the time, Unicoi State Park was the only state park with a traditional hotel-style lodge within park limits.[5] Success of the lodge at Unicoi spurred interest in creating lodges at other Georgia State Parks. The state commissioned a study in 1984 by to evaluate options for increasing state revenue. The study showed that most Georgians were vacationing in neighboring states, and that by improving state parks, the state could entice more residents to travel within Georgia. One suggested improvement was creating more lodges at state parks, which included how a backcountry-style lodge could be used in more rural areas as a special appeal to tourists. When Foote heard about the study, he became especially excited about

[5] Though originally acquired by the state in 1954 with no lodge or campsite, the property was given to the North Georgia Mountains Authority in 1968 and used as an outdoor recreation experiment station. It was re-acquired by the state in 1973, including a lodge that was built during the time the state did not own or manage it.

creating a backcountry lodge. A rustic, off-grid facility was right up his alley and he championed the cause.

Hearing the results of the study, newly elected Gov. Joe Frank Harris established the goal to develop at least three major tourism and economic development facilities in the state, one of which was a project dubbed the Amicalola Falls Park Expansion.[6] For this project, the state planned to build a main lodge at Amicalola Falls State Park, improve the dam and road within the park, build a backcountry walk-in lodge located approximately five miles from the main lodge, re-build the lake that had been drained in the late 1970s, and create a river recreation center. In 1986, Gov. Harris asked the legislature for $6.5 million to fund the whole park expansion project. The project was marketed as a method to keep Georgians from leaving the state for vacations and improve the rural towns in Dawson County, Georgia. The legislature agreed with the idea and approved the funding request.

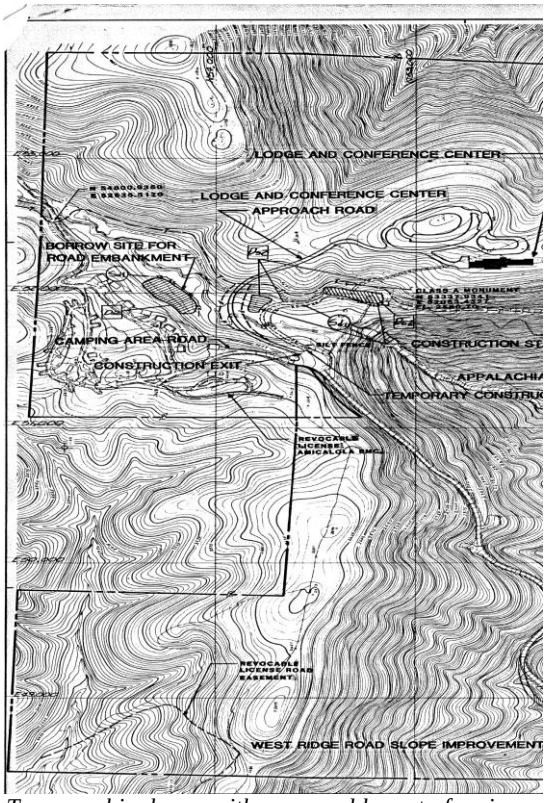
A Plan Is Made

Though the funding was in order, the state still had challenges getting the project off the ground. Before any part of a project can be started, the state must secure all the funding needed to complete it. This means that the state could not even solicit bids for the expansion project until after the legislature approved funding. Basically, the state had to guess how much the project would cost. Although the state took care to accurately guestimate the cost, the lowest bid it received for the Amicalola Falls Park lodge was $1 million higher than projected. The state scrapped the original bids and rewrote its request for services combining

[6] The other two projects on Gov. Harris' list were the Georgia National Fairgrounds in Perry, which he successfully created, and a lodge at Sapelo Island, an idea that he later abandoned.

all the expansion projects in hopes that one contractor would do the whole thing for less money. [7]

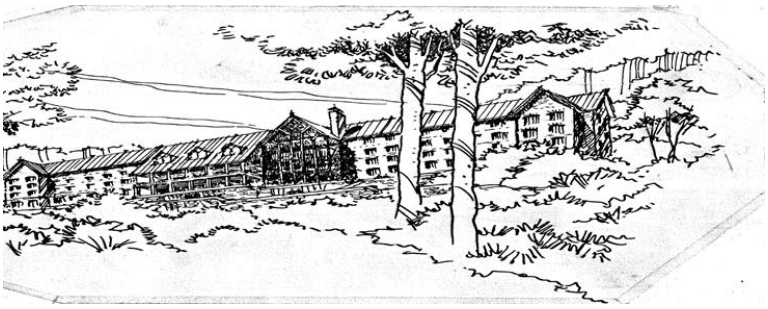
The state didn't actually own the land where it wanted to build the walk-in lodge, didn't own mineral right to some lands within the park where the lodge would be built, and didn't own the land needed for a wastewater treatment lagoon for the main lodge. A 1986 memo from Georgia's legal department to the commissioner of GADNR describes the challenges the state faced in negotiating a swap with U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The USFS was open to a trade, but the two organizations did not agree on the specific lands to be traded. The letter states, "For many months, our Real Estate Unit has been attempting to negotiate for various properties which the Forest Service has identified as suitable to exchange for the four additional land lots which we will need shortly." The state unsuccessfully attempted to obtain some private lands that the USFS was interested in. A deal wasn't made until a Rome, Georgia, lumber company, the Georgia Kraft Company, offered to sell its properties. GADNR successfully bought land from the Georgia Kraft Company that was adjacent to USFS lands to swap for the 120 acres for the walk-in lodge and tracts needed for the lagoon. Then in 1988, the state



Topographical map with proposed layout of main lodge, road improvements and lagoon

[7] Originally, the state sent out separate bids for the main lodge, the dam and road improvements, and the recreational center and backcountry lodge.

successfully purchased mineral rights from Edna Noblin, a long time Dawson County resident who still owned rights within the park.



Sketch of the three-story Amicalola Falls Park Lodge from architectural drawings. From Jordan, Jones, & Goulding, 1987

With land available, funding to build, and inspiration at hand, the GADNR and the Parks Service paired up to put plans on paper. According to architectural drawings from Jordan, Jones & Goulding, the lodge at Amicalola Falls would be a traditional hotel-style facility with 56 guest rooms, conference centers, and a full restaurant. Located above the falls, the new hotel would require the construction of another road. Architects designed the facility to afford guests mountain views with large windows adorning the front desk area and full-service restaurant. A rock patio with Adirondack chairs would offer visitors a place to rest and admire the view. Plans for the walk-in lodge took shape as well. The rustic facility would be designed with sustainability as its key feature. The facility was projected to have 12 guest rooms offering a bare-bones stay. A dining facility would give guests family-style fare with two to three main meals rotated throughout the week. The sketches were drawn, the plans in place, the contracts signed, and the construction begun.

A Dream Is Lost

Yet before any real hotel construction could be started, the state had to build the approach road to the lodge. And that road proved much trickier—and much, much more expensive—than anyone could have imagined. After going over-budget on the road (which

ended up costing more than $1 million), the money for the walk-in lodge was lost.[8] In 1989, Foote died of a heart attack without his dream of a backcountry lodge in Georgia coming true. The Board of Natural Resources started a fund to name a department property in his honor at some point in the future. But at the time, no one knew what property or facility would be best suited for the Len Foote name.

Ledbetter retired as commissioner of GADNR in 1990 and Governor Zell Miller asked Tanner to return to GADNR to fill the position. In 1991, the same year the Amicalola Falls Lodge was opened, the parks service implemented a new user fee collection system for parking to help increase revenue. In 1995, Gov. Miller asked Tanner to lead a special task force designed to privatize some of the state's current functions, including Stone Mountain Park, Lake Lanier Islands Beach and Water Park, and some state park lodges. Amicalola Falls Lodge, along with two other state lodges, was turned over to commercial companies. Without enough funding to maintain operation of its current lodges, GADNR couldn't possible justify building a new one and plans for the walk-in lodge were set aside. Barrett says, "For a while there, the walk-in lodge was nothing but a dream."

Yet, despite all odds, one man was determined not to let the dream die.

[8] Though the park expansion project included many components, the majority of funding was dedicated to the main lodge and conference center. GADNR was able to fix the West Ridge Road, improve the dam and rebuild the lake along with building the main lodge, but no extra funds were available to construct the walk-in lodge or the river recreation center. In fact, in order to finish the lodge, GADNR had to secure additional funds over and above the $6.5 million budget.

Chapter 2: A Champion Is Found

Though the original idea for the walk-in lodge was close to ten years old, it hadn't been completely forgotten. Tanner's new appointment in 1995 led to an opening for GADNR Commissioner, and Lonice Barrett stepped into the role. Filling Barrett's shoes as Georgia State Parks Director was Burt Weerts. It wasn't until Weerts heard of the lost plans and decided to push for funding that the dream was given new life.

Weerts Takes Command

By this time, plans for the walk-in lodge were fairly well known. The preliminary study that spurred the idea had been completed in the 1980s. The USFS land swap was finalized in 1986. The initial construction drawings were commissioned when the main lodge was built in the early 1990s. Completing the walk-in lodge would not be starting from scrap. Weerts believed it was a dream worth pursuing. "Burt had a real love and commitment to that project," Barrett says. Weerts also knew he would need to find funding to get it built.

One of the original sketches of the plans for the walk-in lodge

Architectural plans in hand, Weerts went to the legislature to ask for money to build the inn. As Barrett describes, "Anytime you try to get money for projects, particularly capital outlay projects, it's always difficult." Weerts recalls this project was even harder to fund than others: "A lot of people were not that interested. It's a hard concept to explain initially and a lot of people don't even want to walk 50 yards from their car let alone five miles." It took three or four years of going back and forth to the legislature and securing a little bit of money

here and there, but Weerts persisted. "It was a matter of telling the story," Barrett says. Weerts found an ally and with the help of Senator Guy Middleton, he finally had enough money to build the inn, or so he thought. Once bids went out to companies, Weerts realized he would need more money than expected.[9]

A New Problem Unfolds

Though the legislature approved the funding to build the lodge, GADNR still needed to find a way to operate it. Personnel cutbacks in the state meant the department had no one available to manage the lodge. Barrett decided that since the inn would only be open during the summer months it could be run by volunteers. And he knew just the volunteer organization to ask.

Barrett first met Hillrie Quin when Quin approached him about creating a relationship between the state parks and the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC). As president of GATC, Quin wanted to forge a relationship with the state similar to the one GATC had with the USFS. GATC members were experienced at trail maintenance and had been serving as "Volunteers in the Forest" for years. This mutually beneficial relationship let the GATC members use equipment owned by the USFS, and in return the GATC maintained trails that crossed USFS land. GATC agreed not to file any workers' compensation claims if someone were injured on USFS land and the arrangement had been operating successfully for several years. Barrett agreed with Quin that a similar relationship would help GADNR and GATC.

[9] This dilemma is not uncommon in Georgia state government. In fact, the same issue came up with the main lodge. The original budget for the project was $5,161,000 but when bids came back to the state the lowest bid was $6,253,000. In the end, the park service asked the legislature for $6.5 million to improve Amicalola Falls State Park. The funding was to include the main lodge, the walk-in lodge and a river recreation center. Of course, even the expanded budget wasn't enough to complete the project as planned.

In fact, GATC been maintaining the A.T. for years, and since that trail crossed state parks, it had, in essence, already been working on state-owned lands. Unfortunately, the state's lawyers said no. Due to liability and a slew of other legal reasons, they wouldn't allow it. Barrett was not deterred. He went to the governor and fought to grant GATC permission to volunteer on state land. By showing the success of volunteer/state government relationships elsewhere (Florida had a flourishing volunteer arrangement), Barrett and Quin were able to get the deal approved. Of course, the lawyers still voiced concerns, but forms were signed and thus a lasting partnership began.

This volunteer relationship blossomed and evolved into having GATC members present at annual GADNR meetings. It also led to a long-lasting working relationship between Barrett and Quin. So in the early 1990s, when Barrett had questions about the profitability of state park visitors' centers, he went to Quin to ask for help. Commissioner Barrett asked Quin and a few other people with retail business experience to research the visitors' centers and give a report on whether the centers turned a profit. The team first looked at Amicalola Falls State Park's Visitors' Center. They conducted a detailed study of the gift shop, which was the first time a profit/loss comparison had been done. The state park had a lump sum to buy items for its gift shops, which had to be purchased once a year. The money that paid staff came out of a different fund, and the building space wasn't ever factored into the center's profit/loss, that is, until Quin and the rest of the team came in for its evaluation. The results of the study weren't shocking in the revelation that the centers were losing money—Barrett suspected as much. What was shocking was the amount of money the centers lost annually. In all, the team computed roughly $2 million was being lost

just in operating the state park's visitors' centers each year. Barrett knew that couldn't continue.

So in 1993 Quin started what would be his first (but not his last) non-profit corporation. The Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites was born to help run the visitors centers more smoothly and, fingers crossed, more profitably. Scared to get in over its head, the team decided to only take over one park's visitors' center at a time, starting with Amicalola Falls. Quin recalls telling Barrett, "If we make money for you, we'll expand and if we don't then you'll fire us and we'll go away." Fortunately for all parties involved, the non-profit was successful at making money. The group has expanded over the years, and today has more than 2,000 volunteers. It runs all the state park gift shops and nets the state $3 million a year—quite a financial upswing. Needless to say, Barrett and Quin had a good relationship by the time Barrett needed help once more.

Quin Commits to Future

In 1995, once GADNR had the money to build the lodge but no one to run it, Barrett called Quin and asked if he could get the GATC involved. Barrett hoped to tap into the organization's strong volunteer base to run the lodge. His offer to GATC was a "sweet deal," as Quin describes. The state would pay to build the facility and cover the utilities for running the building. GATC would provide the volunteers and oversee the as-yet-to-be-hired staff and operate the facility on a day-to-day basis. Quin got excited, and he invited a group of friends to meet with GADNR at the state capitol. He brought with him Bob Almand and Joe Boyd, both members of GATC. The team was convinced the walk-in lodge would be a great opportunity for GATC to further its mission of educating the public on environmental issues. Together the three men created a presentation for the GATC board, filling in members on its

proposed role in operating and maintaining this backcountry lodge. The arrangement was unique. The state parks service would build the lodge and maintain ownership, and GATC would operate and staff the facility. But GATC declined the offer. The non-profit had never managed staff or a facility of this nature, and in Quin's words, "the GATC board was scared to death of the idea." Plus, GATC said, its bylaws wouldn't allow it.

Quin admits he was crushed by the board's decision not to operate the walk-in lodge. Luckily, Commissioner Barrett wasn't so easily deterred. He simply asked Quin to create a new non-profit to run the facility. After all, Quin had already created a very successful non-profit to the help the state. Why not do it again? Thus, Appalachian Education and Recreation Services (AERS) was created as a subsidiary organization to GATC with the specific mission to run the walk-in lodge. Quin says, "That is when miracles started to happen." Quin needed a board to run the new non-profit and says the right people with the right skills stepped up at just the right time. The newly created board consisted of a Bob Almand, a Dawson County banker, Fred Stowers, a Dawson County lawyer (who just happened to be one of the largest landowners in the county), Reynolds (the architect who had designed the building 10 years before), GADNR park managers, and, of course, GATC members. From GATC, Joe Boyd, Herb Daniel, Carole Perry, Nancy Shofner, Linda and Jimmy Turner, and Rosalind Van Landingham worked hard to make the walk-in lodge not just a reality, but a success.

Of course, the creation of AERS only solved the issue of what organization would operate the facility. The team still needed to figure out how to do so. To research managing successful backcountry lodges, the team visited the Mount LeConte Lodge in the Great Smoky Mountains and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) huts system in New

Hampshire. At the Mount LeConte Lodge, Quin, Boyd, and Almand discovered that though the proposed walk-in lodge would be similar in some aspects, the two facilities weren't exactly the same. The Mount LeConte Lodge is actually a series of cabins—some single room and some two-bedroom—whereas the walk-in lodge was designed like a Japanese inn with a series of tiered buildings. Guests at Mount LeConte Lodge are served hot meals family style, as planned for the walk-in lodge, but the LeConte Lodge was run by the National Park Service, not volunteers. The AMC huts had similar sustainable design features as the walk-in lodge, such as composting toilets, solar panels, window placement to utilize natural light, and compost bins. So while the team could learn some lessons from the lodges' design, management style and hospitality, it couldn't directly translate any other lodge's exact operational plan for the walk-in lodge.

Basically, the new organization had to do everything anyone would have to do to open a new restaurant and hotel. "We hired staff, developed personnel procedures, designed kitchens and menus, figured out a reservations system, worked with the architect and GADNR on the layout and final design of the building, etc. We were fearless or stupid, and simply put our heads down and got it done," Quin says. The team members were not only forging new territory with how to manage and operate this lodge, but they were doing so with their own money as collateral. Though the state was funding the construction of the inn, the AERS board determined it would need a $100,000 investment to get the lodge started. Almand said he could secure a loan for AERS, but only if the board members put up guarantees of $5-10,000 each to secure it. Most board members agreed to the deal. Quin took the biggest risk: "I think I was in for $25,000 and mine said it was first, so when it went under, I lost all my money before anyone else. It was nerves; I was scared to death." Maybe

they were crazy after all. No one had attempted such a feat before, there was no facility to use as model, and none of them had ever managed or operated a hotel, let alone a backcountry lodge. Luckily, the team's passion and dedication would go a long way towards making the inn a success.

Chapter 3: Breaking Ground (Without Breaking a Mountain)

Succeed or fail, the walk-in lodge was getting closer and closer to becoming a reality. It seemed no other obstacles would stand in the way of the facility being built. Of course, that doesn't mean everything would be smooth sailing either, and since the team put together to operate the facility had no experience operating a backcountry lodge, many lessons were learned in the school of hard knocks.

No Dozers Allowed

After AERS was created and the lodge had funding for construction, the state park service issued a request for construction companies to bid on the project. Eagle Construction Company of Georgia located in Ellijay submitted the lowest bid and was chosen as contractor to build the walk-in lodge. The original contract, signed by Barrett, for $830,000 was issued on July 14, 1997. [10] David Freedman, Georgia State Parks Chief Engineer, Garland Reynolds, the architect, and of course, Quinn worked with the construction company to meet design specifications. The construction was to be completed within 184 days of the notice to proceed. But that date would not stand. Many issues and challenges arose during the actual construction of the facility.

The stickiest issue of all was the mud. The key players involved in the inn's construction recall an unusually rainy period between July 1997 and October 1998, when the inn was opened. An old USFS road led from the Amicalola Lodge to near where the walk-in lodge site, but the road was in rough shape and had to be improved and extended to allow the

[10] In May 1996, a report estimating funds available and needed for the walk-in lodge stated GADNR had $400,000 available and estimated funding needs from $580,000 to $910,000.

contractor access. The team briefly looked into dropping supplies in by helicopter but soon realized that method was not economically feasible. So they pushed forward with a traditional build under far from traditional circumstances. The contractor chosen to construct the facility wasn't familiar with backcountry lodge builds (but then, not many contractors specialize in such unique projects). Unlike many construction sites in urban environments, the contractor did not have access to power, water, or restroom facilities during the construction of the inn.

The unique environment and design of the facility meant GADNR had to take a hands-on approach to managing the project. Scott Corn served as construction project manager for GADNR during the build and visited the site almost every day during construction. Freedman was at the site at least once a week to assist with any issues as they arose. Yet with the heavy rainfall and lack of a good road to start with, mud became a daunting competitor. By vehicle, the walk-inn lodge is seven miles from the main lodge—a distance made to seem even longer by the rough conditions. Though GADNR did complete some improvements to the road, it didn't do so with intent to make it a smooth ride. Staying true to the inn's mission, the state wanted to impact the environment as little as possible and amend the road only to make it passable—though not easily so. Weerts recalls the road being

Construction on a rainy, muddy day

washed out after heavy rains and numerous flat tires from workers trying to navigate to the site.

Though the weather presented a challenge that could not be controlled, some challenges were implemented by GADNR. Staying true to the sustainable mission of the inn, the department decided to limit heavy equipment on site to prevent disturbing any soil or causing erosion issues. Freedman says, "We limited the equipment within the area around the lodge. They [the contractor] could only have one backhoe and a tractor and maybe a ditch witch but no other vehicles or heavy equipment." In fact, GADNR was so dedicated to this mission that it implemented a fine of $2,000 for anyone who entered the building site with a truck or heavy equipment. The remote location also meant the contractor had no access to water or power on site and had to bring in its own generator and water during the build.

As with many projects, once the construction began, some changes needed to be made. On December 22, 1997, the first change order to the contract was signed by GADNR. This change order stated that the grades at the site did not match those on the civil drawings and that the contractor would be required to "blast and remove rock to a depth of 10 feet." Additional fees of $40,103 would be paid to the contractor for rock removal, tree clean up and installation of retaining walls. The contract period was extended 30 days to allow for the changes. But wait, didn't the team say it wouldn't disturb the land for construction of the inn? Yes, it did. Reynolds states there was absolutely no grading done at the site. The changes detailed here were for road improvements and did not impact the actual site of the inn. Of course, the mountain itself was still affected, but the team maintained its commitment to construct and operate the facility as sustainably as possible. The road to the inn had to be extended about two miles and the existing service road area had to be widened to

accommodate trucks bringing in materials. Since the alternative plan to use helicopters had already been nixed because of the added expense, the road was the team's only option.

October 7, 1998, brought on yet another change order. This time $31,785 and 30 days were added to the contract adding numerous items not included in the original contract/design. Most of these changes were required by outside agencies. In order to receive its occupancy certificate, the fire marshal inspector required a new hood over the kitchen, more sprinkler heads, and emergency lighting. Baseboards had to be stained to seal the wood as a cleanable surface in order to pass health code inspection. The installation of gutters gave the inn another method to be sustainable. The gutters would capture rainwater and bring it to rain barrels, which could store the precious resource for use in the garden area during drier seasons.

Power Struggles

The inn's construction story does not end with its physical presence on the mountain. The issue of powering the facility remained. The inn was designed to allow the sun to light the rooms during the day with kerosene lamps used during the evening and night. A propane tank would fuel the ovens in the kitchen. The structural design of the inn allowed air circulation to provide a natural cooling effect. Yet the team had to abandon its off-grid idea. It needed power for one simple reason—water.

Originally, the team hoped to use a mountain stream as a water source for the inn. A hydraulic ram would use kinetic energy from the mountain stream's water flow to build up pressure and, in a sense, "ram" the water through the pipe. Though the design itself would have worked and initial testing of the stream was completed, the idea was abandoned. Freedman explains, "We did sample the creek but as we got into it we realized monitoring

and environmental requirements for a surface water facility were just too much." Before surface water can be considered a potable (or drinkable) water source it must be treated with chlorine and fluoride. Storing the chemicals and the constant treating and testing of the water started to become a complicated and costly scheme. The team to turn to plan B—drilling a well for water.


"The lifeline of the inn," aka the well

This decision was a game-changer in the life of the inn, but implementing the new strategy proved difficult. Freedman says, "We couldn't produce enough power for the well to function" with renewable energy. To power the well's pump, the inn would have to be on the grid. "That was a major challenge," Weerts says. "We couldn't afford to hire a contractor to do it." Thankfully, Amicalola Electric Membership Corporation (EMC) donated the new power line. Working with the EMC and USFS, GADNR acquired an easement to dig a trench for the power line to be buried in. The line runs all the way up the mountain. Reynolds coined the well "the lifeline of the inn" because it was such a vital component to the inn's operation—vital because the well supplies the only water source for the guests and staff and because the decision to have a well changed so many plans for the inn's design. The well is located about 50 yards above the site of the inn, near staff housing.[11]

With electricity, kerosene lanterns were abandoned for light bulbs. Ceiling fans were installed to help cool the facility in the summer months and to push hot air down during

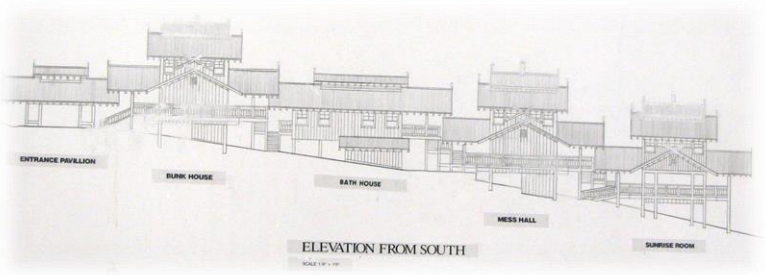
[11] Staff housing was not in the original design but was added in 2002.

colder months. The bathhouse has automated lighting that goes off when no one is present. Today the inn uses only compact florescent light bulbs in order to use minimize energy usage, and each guest room is lit by one single bulb. Obviously, having an on-grid facility changed the team's original vision, and it could have easily changed the team's mission had it not taken the time and care to stay true to sustainability. Perhaps, it could be argued, that being on-grid actually enhances the inn's mission. If the goal is to teach people that sustainable living is possible in their everyday lives, why not show them that having power available doesn't mean you shouldn't conserve it? Or that having a "traditional" source of water doesn't mean you should waste it? The team could have abandoned composting toilets and gone with traditional flush; it had the water and power available to do so. It could have decided to create a one-of-a-kind backcountry inn that made luxuries available to guests—hot tubs, wine tastings, masseuses, luxury bedding. But it didn't. Even though the team amended plans and changed parts of the design, it stayed true to its mission.

This Inn Has Legs

Reynolds Architects created the drawings and specifications for the build. M. Garland Reynolds, Jr. FAIA (Fellow of the American Institute of Architects), president of Reynolds Architects, was no stranger to designing unique facilities in Georgia. His most notable designs include the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Savannah, the Chateau Elan, The Lakewood Marta Station, the Southeastern Indian Museum at Reinhardt University (otherwise known as the Funk Heritage

Center), The Tallulah Gorge Interpretive Center, The Stamp Mill Program Center at Camp Glisson in Dahlonega, and the Byron Herbert Reece Interpretive Center in Union County.

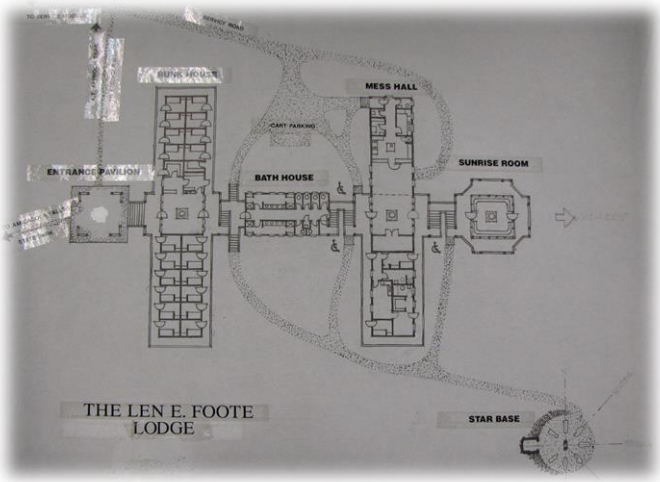


Reynolds chose to fashion the walk-in lodge similar to a traditional Japanese inn. These inns often follow the natural landscape of the environment. They are also known for being situated off the beaten path, having simple rooms (usually with just a mattress on the floor), communal bath areas separated by gender, and group dining areas with dinner and breakfast included in the price of the night's stay. In keeping with this Japanese style, Reynolds designed the facility to stand on stilts and consist of a series of tiered buildings that follow the natural slope of the mountain on which it resides. Reynolds' plans also included simple rooms, a shared bath area and group dining. This design helps to create a mood or feel of relaxation and peace, but also stays true to the walk-in lodge's mission of sustainability. Because the design followed the slope of the land, no grading was required. Even with the stilts in place, the inn's entire construction included not one square centimeter of concrete.[12] The natural flow of the inn's design begins on the trail, bringing hikers through the woods to the facility, which consists of a covered outdoor area, a bunk house with a center lobby, a bathhouse, dining hall, and sunrise room.

The entrance pavilion was designed to allow weary hikers a place to rest after their arrival. The laid-back welcome is part of the experience Reynolds envisioned for guests

[12] Rocks were set around the inn's stilts to provide stability instead of the more modern method of setting them in concrete.

when visiting the inn. His goal was to get people out of their ordinary lives so that the cares and worries of every day are gone. He also hoped the inviting pavilion would stop hot, sweaty guests from plowing straight into the lobby, bringing with them moisture that could warp the all wood interior. This pavilion sits at ground level and is the only "building" of the inn that is not supported by stilts. The stilted design of the facility gives it the look that the inn was either dropped from space or tip-toed its way up the mountain. Having an inn on "legs" allows air to circulate under the building to quickly cool it off during Georgia's hot summer months.



From the pavilion, guests walk up a small, eight-step stairway to the bunkhouse and into the inn's lobby. Though it hardly resembles an in-town hotel lobby, this area is where guests go to check in and out. A wood-burning stove heats the building in the winter and screen doors at both doorways allow for a breeze in the summer. The high ceiling is topped with a roof vent designed to compensate for the sweat of hikers and prevent raining of condensation from the excessive moisture brought in by guests.[13] Padded benches and coffee tables with reading material strewn about them make the lobby a popular hangout for guests. Behind the check-in counter is a small office with a phone and, today, a computer. Staff

[13] This phenomenon actually happened in the huts in New Hampshire. After witnessing it firsthand, Reynolds decided to vent each room in the lodge.

members maintain constant communication with Amicalola Falls park rangers discussing deliveries of supplies and guest arrivals.

As with all the buildings of the lodge, the bunkhouse was designed to be easily constructed on site. By creating a design that used standard sized plywood sheets, Reynolds added to the inn's sustainable efforts—no wasted materials came from cutting plywood sheets to construct the facility. The extra time and care Reynolds took is a step often avoided in new construction. And our landfills are paying the price. Joel Bittle with Green Building Elements states, "According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) study, an estimated 8,000 pounds of waste is created from the construction of a 2,000 square foot home." Most of that waste, he says, is wood, cardboard, and drywall, and it almost all ends up in landfills. By eliminating wood and drywall waste (no drywall was used at all), the walk-in lodge did its part to help the environment by not contributing to this staggering statistic.

On either side of the lobby are the actual guest rooms, which Reynolds describes as "a degree or two above a tent." Twenty in all, each guest room offers a twin-sized bunk bed fitted with thin, small mattresses. The rooms' amenities (if you dare call them that) also include an open cubby area with shelving, wooden dowel hooks, pillows, and blankets for colder nights. The narrow rooms provide guests a place to rest and an area to store their gear. They offer little else. As Reynolds says, he "didn't want to give people any reason to stay in their room." Each room has an

outdoor entrance with a screen door and a solid wood door. A wrap-around balcony surrounds the bunkhouse offering views of the mountains, the area flora and fauna, or a peak at newly arriving guests. It's hard to walk around the balcony without seeing someone admiring the view, photographing a bee on a blossoming mountain laurel, or chatting with a newly-made friend.

From the back end of the lobby, stairs lead straight down to the bathhouse or veer to the right leading to ground level. Guests can walk to and from each tiered building without ever stepping foot on the ground or they can stroll the grounds by following gravel trails. When the weather is bright and clear, most guests choose the gravel paths that weave them through the inn's native garden and offer them a closer connection to nature. Between the over hangs and the porches, the inn's design offers guests shelter during the rainy days so that a day at the inn can be enjoyed no matter what the weather on the North Georgia mountain.

The bathhouse may make guests feel as if they've entered a narrow corridor of nothing. The all-wood décor makes the doors blend into the walls, giving this childhood funhouse tunnel-like effect. This building might be the most impressively underappreciated one on the site (then again, bathrooms usually aren't given high praise). Here, modern conveniences are not only

made available, but they are sustainable. On the right side is the women's room with a row of sinks and two separate showers that flank the sinks on either end. The left side is the men's room, a mirror image to the women's. Water for showers is heated with solar panels (and augmented with energy when needed). [14] A water fountain juts out in the main hallway of the bathhouse. Past the women's and men's rooms are the toilets.

Waterless composting toilets required special research to properly design. Reynolds travelled to the AMC huts in New Hampshire to see similar facilities in action. The colder climates in New Hampshire required a fill-removal method, whereby toilet "material" was stored in 50-gallon drums then lifted off the mountain via helicopter once full. The material was stored until the ground thawed enough for it to be used in a composting bin. But the walk-in lodge wouldn't face the same frozen climate, giving way to a different option for waterless toilets. Large fiberglass tanks house the waste and the compost material must be cleaned out about every two years, or when the bins are full. The composting toilets save approximately 150,000 gallons of water a year compared with traditional flush toilets. Yet the "feel" of these toilets is much the same as their modern water-wasting black-sheep-of-family cousins. And here is one way the guests can "give back" to the inn. Humanure, as the guest-created compost material is called, is used around the inn's shrubs and trees. So guests

[14] The original design of the inn used water bladders on the roof of the bathhouse that were heated by the sun. In 2009, that system was replaced by more modern solar panels.

really can say they've left a little piece of themselves behind (pun intended). The back of the bathhouse leads to a porch and another set of stairs that head down to the dining hall.

Designing a backcountry kitchen definitely created a challenge. Since the kitchen serves guests, just as a restaurant does, it must meet all the health codes that an in-town restaurant is held to. In other words, the kitchen had to be fully equipped with commercial grade ovens, sinks, and refrigerators and freezers as any in-town restaurant would be. One particularly troublesome piece of equipment was the hood to go over the oven. The hood originally chosen did not pass inspection from the fire marshal, which resulted in numerous memos exchanged between GADNR and the fire safety department before the issue was resolved. The type of fuel the oven used created another unique challenge. Not many commercial kitchens have a propane tank out back. Within the kitchen are a dry storage area, a restroom, a stove and large refrigerators and freezers.

In the center of the dining area sits a wood-burning stove to provide heating for guests. Guests eat at long picnic-style tables in the dining area. This family-style table design is another purposeful design tactic—and it wasn't just to make serving food easier. The mission of the inn is communion and that flows through to mealtimes. It's hard not to befriend fellow guests when you have to ask them to pass the gravy or dinner rolls. Not to mention that there is something bonding about dipping food out from the same container.

Coming from the bathhouse and facing the kitchen, the staff apartment sits at the right side of the building. This apartment was designed for the inn's manager to live in and includes its own small kitchen and bath area.[15] Next to the staff apartment is the handicap accessible suite, comprising a guest room and separate bath. Though the inn is a backcountry lodge and accessible to guests only by hiking, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires that the inn provide handicap-accessible rooms, facilities, and accommodations. But how would a person with a disability get to the Hike Inn? Well, here's where a little-known secret comes in. The road that was used during the inn's construction still exists. It is not accessible to guests, with one very specific exception. Guests who require assistance due to a disability will be driven in to the staff housing area. From there, the staff assists disabled guests to their room by golf cart. And, yes, it has been done, though rarely.

From the back of the kitchen, stairs lead down to the last building of the inn, the sunrise room. True to its name, the sunrise room faces east and is surrounded by windows, serving as the perfect venue to gaze upon the orange, red, and yellow bursts of color as the sun rises above the trees. Another wood-burning stove sits in the center of this room, warming blanket-bundled guests as they rub sleep from their eyes and watch the morning show. On clear days, guests can look to the northeast for a glimpse of

[15] The original intent was that the manager would be the only fulltime onsite personnel. All other duties were planned to be delegated to volunteers.

Springer Mountain, perhaps hearing a call or whisper from the A.T. to come follow the white blaze a while. In the evenings, guests can sit in the log chairs or padded benches and enjoy the view, chat with other hikers, strum a communal guitar, borrow a book from the inn's library, piece together a puzzle, play cards, or invite a fellow guest to a friendly game of Monopoly or chess. The room's bank of windows act as eyes, allowing guests to peer out at nature and allowing nature to look in at the softly-treading guests. Alternatively, the walk-around porch encircles the building and offers yet another place for guests to relax on benches and Adirondack chairs, enjoy the view, or sip their morning cup of joe.

Though Reynolds can't pick one favorite building he has designed throughout his career, he says, "I will admit, however, that The Hike Inn Lodge at Amicalola State Park is a special favorite with a unique story." In an interview with *Gainesville Times*, he further describes the inn:

> This remote state park and historic site facility was constructed on the top east side of a mountain on the access trail leading up to join with the beginning of the A.T. on Springer Mountain. . . . Designing it involved a lot of research including walking through the White Mountains of New Hampshire where I learned how *not* to construct self-composting toilets and how to ventilate rooms to prevent moisture coming from perspiring arriving hikers from collecting on ceilings and raining down. [16]

Reynolds passion for this project is evident in the care he took to design it and the fondness in his voice as he speaks about it today.

[16] Burt Weerts laughingly reported that Reynolds loves this "boots-on-the-ground" type of research, especially since he can "charge it to the project."

Despite the tough weather conditions, limited contractor experience, and multiple changes on site, the inn's build was complete in October 1998. After construction, David Freedman commented that the inn was in fact "a surgically implanted building," based on the state's and contractor's care in constructing it. Today, guests comment about the way the lodge blends in to its surrounding area and how they feel the building lives in harmony with the nature around it.

Chapter 4: A New Building Is Born

Celebrating a Birth, Honoring a Death

October 30, 1998 was a bright and sunny fall afternoon—a perfect day for the walk-in lodge to hold its opening ceremony. At 1:30 p.m., a crowd gathered to witness the occasion and to celebrate the victories of the numerous heroes who fought for this day to arrive. Due to time constraints or health concerns, some people, like Barrett and Foote's wife, made the trip that day by car, travelling up the newly improved USFS road. Most attendees celebrated the birth of the lodge by donning their hiking boots and hitting the trail. When they reached the top of the trail, their view would be the same as the soon-to-arrive guests. During the joyous occasion flickers of doubt still lingered in the minds of those who championed for this very day to arrive. Barrett admits to having "thoughts about whether or not we'd have enough people willing to walk the four to five miles" to stay at the lodge. His uncertainty gave way to pure happiness at seeing the dream of the facility now a reality. As director of GADNR, Barrett wasn't able to visit the site during construction, so though he had heard about inn's unique features, he first witnessed them during the opening ceremony.

Weerts delivers speech at opening ceremony

Burt Weerts, then Director of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, served as Master of Ceremonies. Among the speakers that day were many of the inn's champions and current or future AERS board members: Dr. Bob Darby, Pastor of Bethel United Methodist Church in Dawsonville provided the invocation; Barrett gave introductions; and remarks were given by Senator Middleton of Georgia Senate District 50, Fred Stowers a Chairman of the Dawson County Chamber of Commerce, Quin, then president of AERS, and Russell Foote, son of Len Foote. True to the inn's nature and mission, much communion took place that day as friends of old and acquaintances newly formed gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony and refreshments that followed. Many GADNR staff attended the opening, including Bob Bolz, then park manager at Amicalola Falls State Park, as did Edwin Dale from the USFS and Carol Perry from GATC. Joe and Helen Boyd, both active in the inn's beginning were present as well.

Barrett and Weerts hang the lodge's sign honoring Len Foote

Before the axe came down to cut the yellow ribbon officially opening the inn, a rustic wooden sign was hung over the pavilion entrance. It said "Len Foote Lodge," finally giving an official name to the Amicalola Falls walk-in lodge as it had been known during construction. (They really did use an axe though no one recalls if there was a symbolic reason for the axe or if someone just forgot the scissors.) When Foote passed away in 1989 at the age of 70, the Board of Natural Resources established the Foote Nongame Wildlife Project and encouraged family and friends to donate to the fund. Though the board didn't know how or when the funds would be used, it knew it wanted to recognize the many great accomplishments of Foote. It also asked the commissioner of GADNR to identify a property or park that could be named in Foote's honor. It only seemed fitting that the walk-in lodge, a sustainable one-of-a-kind facility, should be the property chosen to honor him.

In state government, the usual process for a facility, park or area to be named in honor of a person would be very official. Perhaps the process would start by one person mentioning an idea for a name. If there was interest from other members that idea might be brought up at a meeting, and eventually there would be some official vote or motion resulting in a signed decision or memo stating the decision officially. None of that process occurred to name the

walk-in lodge after Len Foote. As best people can remember the decision was made by the Board of Natural Resources and backed by, well, everyone else, including AERS board members. Many of the team members knew Foote personally or at least knew his reputation professionally. "The name just sort of stuck," Weerts says, noting how unusual it is that a lodge like this be named after anyone in the first place. Apparently, it was just an easy, obvious decision. Barrett says, "Because of what we tried to do at the walk-in lodge, I believe Len was the ideal person to honor, and not only to honor Len Foote. Len Foote's family honored us by letting us name the facility after him."

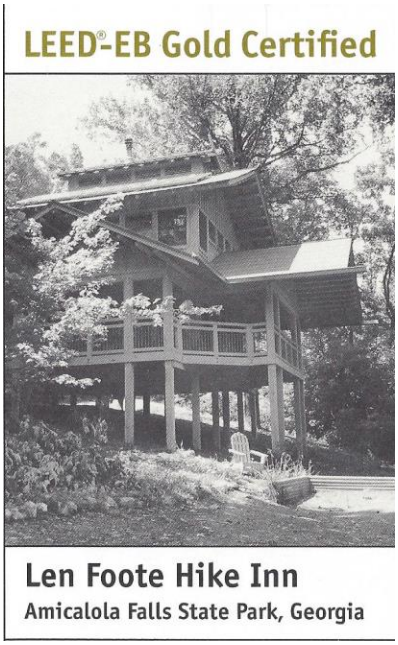
And the inn did more than just hang a sign with the Foote name on it. The lobby showcases Foote's life through his backpack, his photograph, and a cartoon he served as an inspiration for. The three books Foote co-authored, enclosed behind a glass case, were dedicated to the inn by Foote's family. Additional copies can be found in the Sunrise room for guests to borrow during their stay. Foote's presence is carried further as each guest room has but one decorative touch—a picture of a wildflower photographed by Foote. Though the inn certainly couldn't begin to display all of the more than 1,000 wild flower species catalogued in Foote's book *Gardening with Native Wild Flowers*, it did its best to highlight Foote's skills as photographer, botanist, and conservationist. Under each photograph in the 20 guest rooms at the inn is a description of the specific flower or plant species shown, as it appears it Foote's book. Room 2 features the *Lobelia siphilitica* captioned: "Great Lobelia has 2-lipped, bluish violet flowers nearly one inch long. Because it blooms over a longer period of time and is easily maintained in garden culture, the Great Lobelia is actually a better plant than the more popular Cardinal Flower."

Herein lies yet another way the inn teaches guests—about Foote's life as much as about nature itself. Informational signs are scattered throughout the inn. The native garden, a safe haven for plants that lost their homes from new construction or other civilian-led projects, displays signs informing guests of the plant's common name and species. The garden is also a Certified Pollinator Habitat that welcomes bumblebees, butterflies, and ants, as a sign proudly states. The certification also requires at least nine conservation practices be maintained including "xeriscape (a landscape technique which has reduced requirements for water by using native plants and shrubs or other drought tolerant plants)." Foote would surely be proud of the inn, not only for its conservation efforts but for its mission to teach others about the importance of native species. In his book *Gardening with Native Wild Flowers*, he writes, "A garden of perennial, native wild flowers provides enduring joy and pleasure, something permanent in a world of impermanence."

Perhaps even more telling than the efforts on the inn's property is that the whole journey to the Len Foote Lodge reflects the same mission of its namesake. From the moment guests embark on the trail to the inn, they are immersed in nature, in conservation, and in appreciation of the ecosystem around them. Mile markers along the trail are placed not only to keep hikers aware of how far they've been, but also to point out special interests along the way. With the accompanying map, guests know to look for American holly trees at marker 1.9 and running ground pine at 4.3. This effort to begin educating guests with their first step on the trail shows the level of commitment to conservation that AERS adopted. During the opening ceremony, Barrett walked the grounds with Foote's wife, Grace. Somewhere along

the tour, Grace stopped, looked at Barrett and said, "Len would have been so happy to see this."

A Pioneering LEEDer



The Len Foote Lodge was built to be as sustainable as possible simply because the team believed it was the right thing to do. In other words, GADNR, the architect and visionaries of the inn were not aiming to win any awards or popularity contests by building a sustainable backcountry inn. They simply wanted to preserve the environment and teach others how beautiful and functional a building can be while maintaining responsible sustainable design and operation. Despite their noble efforts on the basis of ideals alone, they ended up winning an award. In 2004, the Len Foote Lodge, now known as the Len Foote Hike Inn, was awarded the Gold level for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Existing Buildings (EB) by the U.S. Green Building Council (USBC)—the first building in the Southeast to receive the internationally recognized certification.[17] When the inn was built, LEED certification and even the USBC did not exist. To fully understand the impact of winning this award as an existing building, the history of LEED certifications should be known.

[17] Just as no official documentation exists to show when the name changed from the walk-in lodge to the Len Foote Lodge, no paper trail exists for when the facility became the Len Foote Hike Inn. The inn's first newsletter, dated March 9, 1999, refers to the Hike Inn name although the sign reflecting the change didn't come for many years.

In 1993, three men, Rick Fedrizzi, David Gottfried and Mike Italiano, came together with the idea to establish sustainable (or "green") practices for the building and construction industries. In 2000, the USBC was unveiled, and since then, the non-profit organization has grown to an impressive 77 chapters, 13,000 company and organization members, and more than 181,000 LEED professionals. The LEED certification for commercial buildings rates facilities based on categories including sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. When GADNR caught wind of the trend towards green building practices, it jumped on board. In essence, GADNR was already living by the practices promoted by USBC (as the Len Foote Hike Inn proves). Now GADNR could help promote a cause it believed in by being a part of the new program. In 2006, Freedman wrote, "GADNR has more LEED-certified buildings than any other state agency and ranks third in the nation among all building owners, both public and private, with LEED-certified buildings." Among GADNR's other LEED buildings are The Museum at Franklin D. Roosevelt's Little White House (Silver), The Suwannee River Visitor Center (Gold), The Golf Course Clubhouse at Arrowhead Pointe, Richard B. Russell State Park (Silver; the only LEED-certified golf course clubhouse) and The Dining Hall at Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center (Silver).

Though the Len Foote Hike Inn was built with the same principles in mind as USBC uses in its LEED certification process, gaining Gold status was not a simple process. When USBC first unveiled its LEED certification for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) in 2004, Freedman applied to participate in the pilot program. As such, Freedman was able to work directly with USBC inspectors to show how the Hike Inn met criteria, though in an unconventional way. For instance, most commercial buildings don't use worms to help reduce their waste production as

the Hike Inn does. Through vermiculture, the inn turns paper, linen, and food waste into compost for its gardens. Likewise, commercial buildings don't feature composting toilets as a method for water conservation. These unique traits of the Hike Inn wouldn't have been easily "scoreable" on the LEED certification application if the inn was considered during the regular process, but since it was in the pilot program and the LEED inspectors were still working on how to evaluate features, it was able to qualify for LEED-EB Gold. Freedman admits, "I guess if I wanted to submit it now for LEED-EB, I'm not sure it would meet the standards. But I think at the time, for the pilots they liked a variety of building types, and that's why they liked the Hike Inn." Even so, the inn was designed before LEED existed (and before "green" building was popular) and it isn't even the type of facility LEED certification is designed for in the first place, making its Gold certification even more impressive.

Maintaining a Remote Lodge

One might think that once the building was constructed, its doors open, and its operation in action that maintaining the inn would be smooth sailing. Not so. The inn's operation was and is an ongoing learning experience for the board of AERS and the inn's fulltime staff. Some of the initial challenges were due to operational changes when the inn first opened. During the planning phase, Quin took inspiration for the inn's operation after well-known backcountry lodges like LeConte Lodge in Tennessee and the AMC huts in New Hampshire. These lodges are open seasonally and have minimal fulltime staff. Similarly, the board of AERS decided to do the same, having only one fulltime staff member and closing during the winter. The board quickly changed its plans. The mild Georgia winters (even in the mountains) soon proved not the same obstacle as the Tennessee and New Hampshire counterparts, so there was no reason for the inn to close during those months.

The board also soon realized one fulltime staff person was not nearly enough. Sure, it could simply hire more people, but that led to another issue—no room for them to stay. The staff apartment was built for only one person. When it first opened, the inn had four staff members, but since there wasn't lodging for them all, they were commuting over an hour to work each way, each day. And even with four people, they were tired all the time. Quin says he quickly realized they needed to double that number. With the increase in staff came an immediate need for staff housing. GADNR offered to help pay for supplies, but volunteers from GATC and AERS would actually build the new structure. In order not to detract from the Hike Inn's visual appeal, staff housing was staged up the mountain, accessible by trail or electric golf cart, but not viewable from the inn. Called the Boyd House (after AERS board member Joe Boyd who designed the facility), the building was completed in 2003, though its construction was a slow and arduous process. AERS Board member, Don Walling laments, "We'll never go through that again, because we realized to get a structure built it was very tough to do it with just volunteer help, and it took us twice as long [as it should have]."

Staff housing built in 2002, aka the Boyd House

Quin also fashioned a meal plan after the Mount LeConte Lodge and based on the initial plan to have an off-grid facility. He planned simple "one-pot meals" that would be rotated between two or three similar variations (e.g., spaghetti one night and chili the next).

AERS realized this plan wouldn't work either. Even if guests were only there for a day or two stay at a time, the staff was literally fed up with the spaghetti/chili rotation. The menu was revamped though it still employed full use of leftovers (mostly to reduce food waste). Meals today often have a gourmet flair and may include chicken, pork or roast beef with vegetables, salad, bread, chocolate ribbon pound cake, and mixed berry coffee cake. Breakfast features eggs, grits, sausage or bacon, apple cornbread, and biscuits. The menu has improved so much that guests have asked for recipes of their favorite dishes. AERS responded by including the most highly requested recipes (mostly desserts) in the Kitchen Corner section of its newsletter.

The family-style dining is one practice that has been working successfully since the inn's opening in 1998. The inn's one "rule" for mealtime: eat what you put on your plate. Two things are accomplished by this style of dining. First, guests are almost forced into a community spirit. If the hike and setting haven't brought guests closer to one another, meal time surely will. Second, by having each guest serve him or herself a sense of personal accountability is created. Staff also tracks the total amount of food waste guests produce in a meal and rewards low-wasters with a smiley face on the board. In essence, the staff creates both personal accountability and a cooperative spirit as guests encourage each other to work towards a happy face. (A few hard core guests have been seen eating off the plates of strangers to meet the mealtime goal.)

The infamous Food Waste Board at the Hike Inn

The reservations system was another process that needed tweaking over the years. Originally, AERS handled all reservations, but Quin convinced the state to take on individual bookings while he maintained management of the group stays. The park service had (and still has) a centralized booking system for all park accommodations (including lodges, cabins and campsites). Even so, the park's reservation clerks were not accustomed to booking such a unique facility—remember guests must hike five miles to get to the inn and therefore must be informed of such to avoid suitcase toting, "I'm-just-waiting-for-the-shuttle," misinformed customers. To resolve this issue, Quin invited the clerks to stay at the Hike Inn to learn firsthand the unique features of the facility, which worked great until staff turnover created a new crop of clerks who had not visited the inn. To avoid further confusion AERS took back the reservation duties and eventually Quin let go of group reservations as well. Today all Hike Inn reservations are handled by a staff member of AERS.

Though many lessons learned in the first few years of operation led to changes at the inn, one of the first lessons learned before opening continues to this day. Quin and the other AERS board members who visited the AMC Lodges in New Hampshire noticed the importance of a "crew" mentality for the successful operation of a backcountry inn. Working in a remote location away from family, friends, and the conveniences of modern life can be a challenge. The crew effect that Quin witnessed and strived to recreate was that of a family and cooperative spirit between all staff members of the lodge. So no matter what a person's job title is at the inn, everyone helps in all areas. That means the lodge manager helps cook. The cook helps clean. The housekeeper helps guests check in. All staff members have mopped, assisted guests, and cleaned the kitchen. Everyone helps in all aspects of the inn's daily operation. Creating this crew environment is essential for bonding and effective

operation of the inn. It was implemented since day one and continues strong to this day. Current AERS president, Richard Judy, has often been spotted helping clean up the kitchen.

Though staff and reservations proved the biggest challenges during the inn's formative years, regular maintenance continues to prove a mighty task today. For AERS to hire a plumber or painter or just about any contractor, it must plan months ahead. One recent example proves this point. In 2012, the inn needed a new coat of paint. For most commercial buildings or even most state park buildings, this process is fairly straightforward—get bids from approved vendors, pick a vendor based on bids, and complete the work. But a backcountry lodge isn't the easiest venue for commercial painters to get to. In fact, the AERS board spent seven months just to find a contractor willing to drive out to the inn and bid on the job. As the sole bidder, that company easily won. The challenge, then, was getting people and equipment onsite. The painters ended up spending a week at the lodge to complete the job. Of course, with such a remote location, the inn pays top-dollar for any services it needs. Walling recalls needing a plumber on a Sunday to fix the guest hot water heater. The bill for travel to the site was more than parts or labor, a typical scenario the backcountry lodge faces.

The Hike Inn celebrated its 10 year anniversary in 2008, and it is not at all uncommon to find a guest who has been visiting the inn since its opening. Those guests might have noticed a few minor changes to the inn (mostly the welcomed expansion of the menu), but more telling is how many similarities remain today. Just as Foote wrote about native gardens, the Hike Inn serves as an example of "something permanent in a world of impermanence."

Aerial view of the Len Foote Hike Inn

Afterword

GADNR, AERS, GATC and the staff of the inn all work very hard to keep the inn running smoothly. It is a labor of love, and their work has paid off. During the first year, the inn had an average of 38% occupancy with a total of 4,901 guests. Needless to say, the initial start-up loan has been repaid. The AERS board members today are not the same as those who put their life savings on the line before the inn opened. Quin now lives in Highland, North Carolina, where he keeps busy with volunteer organizations in the area. Weerts and Barrett have since retired from GADNR. Weerts now serves as Vice President of the Friends of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites, which he has been actively involved with since his retirement from the state. Though the board members today never had to back the inn with their personal finances, they are just as dedicated to its success as the initial members. Staff is just as committed to promoting sustainable practices and maintaining a family-like setting with each other and with the guests of the inn.

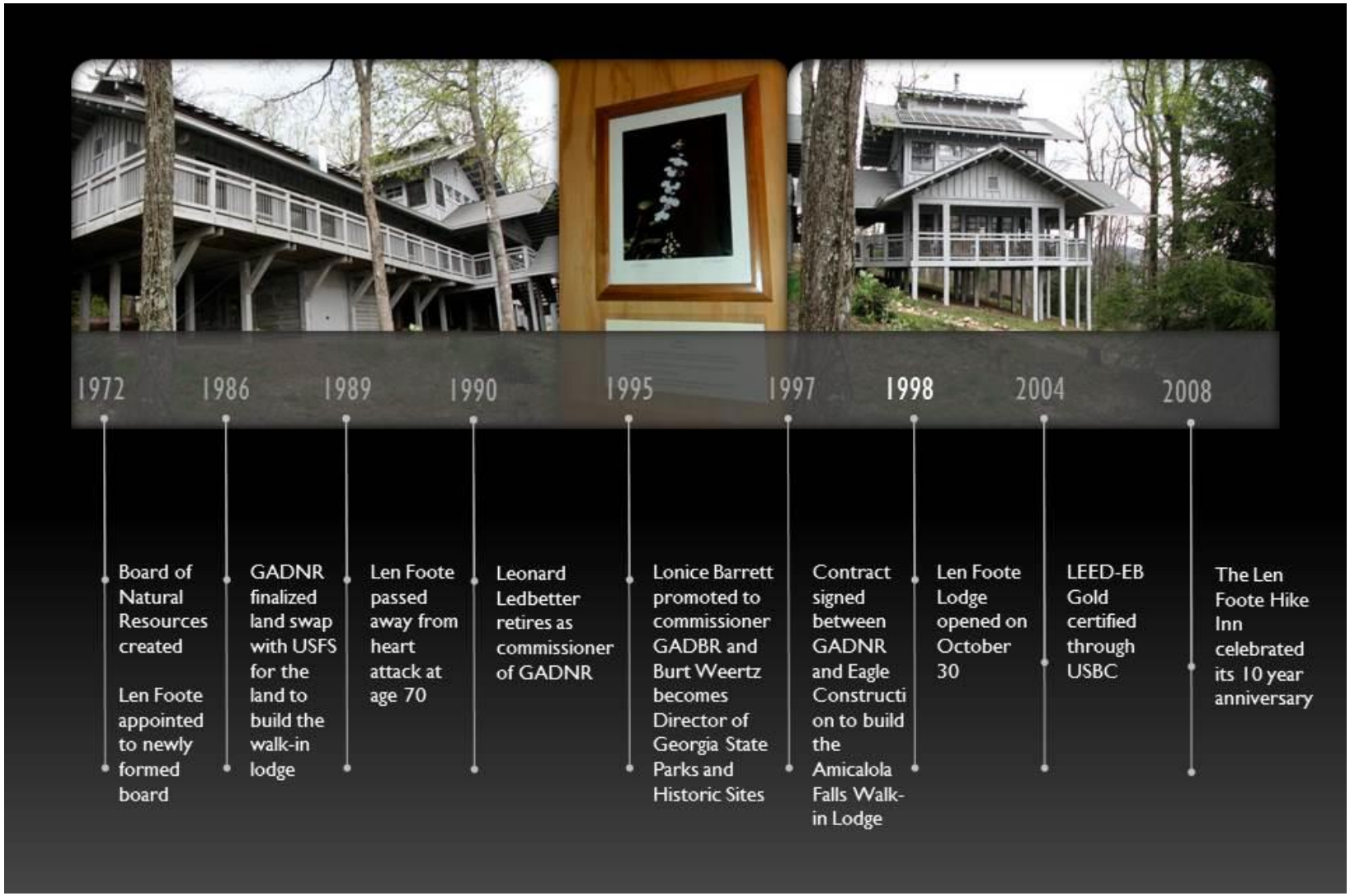
The Len Foote Hike Inn started as a dream, and it almost died before ever becoming more. Luckily, the dedication and hard work of several men and women paid off to make the inn the success it is today. With a record-breaking 8,000 guests in 2012, the inn certainly has thrived despite its struggles. Barrett says, "I've never seen a facility that from day one was appreciated or complimented or folks enjoyed as much as that facility. I think that's a tribute to people like Hillrie Quinn and the GATC and AERS. It's something that is different. It's rustic. It's not your normal everyday experience. It is something that everybody who has been a part of was pleased to see developed."

Over the years, the Len Foote Hike Inn has grown not in space but in heart—with staff reaching out to partner with other like-minded non-profit organizations and with the

expansion of its educational outreach programs. Current lodge manager, Wade Chandler has worked with the Georgia Conservancy, REI, and GATC organizing improvement projects, educational programs, and other charitable events. AERS awards the Hillrie Quin Scholarship annually to a local college student interested in pursuing a career in environmental science or conservation related fields, a stay at the Hike Inn is included in the award. Most importantly, the inn has stayed true to its original mission and faithful to the heart, the life, and the legacy of its namesake. Len Foote might not have ever visited the Hike Inn, but his spirit is alive within its walls.

Appendix

Timeline


1972
1986
1989
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1995
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1998
2004
2008
Board of Natural Resources created
Len Foote appointed to newly formed board
GADNR finalized land swap with USFS for the land to build the walk-in lodge
Len Foote passed away from heart attack at age 70
Leonard Ledbetter retires as commissioner of GADNR
Lonice Barrett promoted to commissioner GADBR and Burt Weertz becomes Director of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites
Contract signed between GADNR and Eagle Constructi on to build the Amicalola Falls Walk-in Lodge
Len Foote Lodge opened on October 30
LEED-EB Gold certified through USBC
The Len Foote Hike Inn celebrated its 10 year anniversary

Biographies

The men and women, state and government employees and volunteers alike, who made the Hike Inn dream a successful reality are too numerous to mention in entirety. The following biographical snippets (arranged alphabetically by last name) of those most often mentioned during the history of the inn are included below as a reference.

Bob Almand: Almand served as the third AERS board president. Before AERS was created, Almand was active with the GATC and the parent non-profit organization the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). He retired as an executive with Bank of America and has served as a member on the ATC board for the past 10 years.

Lonice Barrett: Barrett earned a bachelor's degree in recreation administration from Georgia Southern University and a master's in education from Georgia State University. He served 34 years with GADNR, commissioner from 1995 to 2004. Though officially retired, he currently works as an advisor at the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism.

Bob Bolz: During the inn's construction, Bolz was director of the Amicalola Falls State Park. He was actively involved in the inn's site selection and assisted in construction of the trail to the inn. Bolz served 34 years with GADNR before retiring. He currently works in the training department for the Dawson County Sheriff's Office.

Joe Boyd: Long-time GATC member, Joe Boyd was heavily involved in the Hike Inn's creation including going to meetings early on, visiting the AMC huts in New Hampshire and becoming an original board member of AERS. He was known for his handy work and designed the staff housing,

subsequently dubbed the Boyd House. Boyd passed away in 2004 at the age of 83.

Len Foote: Foote received a bachelor's degree in forestry and wildlife management from the University of Connecticut in 1940 and a master's degree in ecology from the University of New Hampshire in 1942. A well-known conservationist, Foote was appointed to Georgia' newly created Board of Natural Resources in 1972, which he served on for 14 years. He was an avid photographer and co-authored three books on native plants and wildflowers. He passed away from a heart attack in 1989. His wife of 48 years, Grace, passed away in the 1990s. The walk-in lodge at Amicalola Falls was first planned during his time on the Board of Natural Resources but was not built until after his death due to budgetary constraints. The lodge was named for him though he did not live to see its construction.

David Freedman: As chief engineer of the Georgia State Parks Service, Freedman managed the design and build of the facility. He also initiated the inn being evaluated for (and receiving) the internationally recognize LEED-EB Gold certification in 2004.

J. Leonard Ledbetter: Ledbetter served as director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division for 30 years. He also was director of the GADNR during the Board of Natural Resources' inception in 1972. He worked closely with Leonard Foote and was involved in the original concept of the Hike Inn.

S. Guy Middleton: A graduate of Georgia Tech and U.S. Marine Corps veteran, Middleton began his senate career in 1992. He was serving in

Georgia's 50th district at the time of the second funding of the Hike Inn. Middleton worked closely with Weerts to pull together money to fund the inn.

Hillrie Quin: Quin first started volunteering with the GATC in 1976. He was the president of the GATC when the state secured funding to build the inn in 1995 and was asked to help manage the inn (since the state could not support the inn's operation). To do so, Quinn started a non-profit organization, the Appalachian Education and Recreation Services (AERS) that still runs the inn today. He served as that organization's first board president. For his many acts of conservation within the state of Georgia, Quin was recognized with GADNR's highest honor, the Rock Howard Award in 1999.

M. Garland Reynolds, Jr. FAIA: Reynolds was the architect for the Hike Inn. He worked closely with David Freedman, the Chief Engineer of the parks service, to design the inn as sustainable as possible.

Nancy Shofner: Shofner was the trails maintainer for the Len Foote Hike Inn Trail for a number of years. In 2001, she was recognized for 25 years of service with GATC by the ATC.

Joe Tanner: Tanner served as Commissioner of GADNR on two separate occasions. He was the department's first commissioner in 1972 and served until 1984 and then was brought back on as commissioner when Leonard Ledbetter retired in 1990 (and until 1995).

Burt Weerts: Weerts obtained a Bachelor of Science from the University of Wisconsin in Urban Planning and Economics. He started his career with the state of Georgia as Director of Grants Unit for the State Parks and Historic Sites Division in 1978. In 1988,

Weerts moved to the Georgia State Parks Department as Assistant Chief of Operations. Later he was promoted to Assistant Director (1991-1995) and ended his career as Director of Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites (1995-2002). As director, Weerts championed the second funding of the Hike Inn, which was secured in 1995. He worked with Georgia state government officials including GADNR Commissioner Lonice Barrett and Senator Guy Middleton to secure the funding for the Hike Inn. A sign in his honor is located at the Hike Inn today.

Don Walling: Walling is the current AERS recording secretary. He first heard of the Hike Inn in 2000 after his wife and her friend spent a night there and fell in love with it. Walling and his wife became regular guests to the inn and, in 2002, Walling decided to become a volunteer. He has served on the board ever since and is one of the board's long-time members.

Star base during equinox

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Weerts, Burt. Personal interview. 22 Mar. 2012.

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COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Talented and decisive communications specialist with experience in proposal coordination, strategy, writing, and editing. Proven history of meeting and exceeding goals. Deadline oriented professional author, news writer (magazine and newspaper), reporter, editor, layout and designer. Air Force veteran with 10 years combined service in Active Duty and National Guard units.

WORK EXPERIENCE

AMEC ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE, Kennesaw, Georgia April 2007-present
AMEC is a leading consulting firm providing engineering, environmental and remedial construction.
Proposal Writer/Technical Editor

- Project manage proposals, reports and assessments from conception to deliverable ensuring all aspects meet quality standards and satisfy customer needs.
- Coordinate proposal efforts, write various sections of proposals and ensure proposals meet requirements of RFPs and RFQs.
- Review and edit documents for format, logic, organization, consistency, grammar and punctuation.
- Conduct proposal planning meetings with project managers and key team members focusing on developing a winning strategy, highlighting company's differentiators, and proposal design.
- Responds to RFPs and RFQs from various clients including military, government (federal, state, and local) and private sector.
- Submits top-quality proposals in various formats including SF330 format.

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, Kennesaw, Georgia June 2011–August 2011
Public Relations Feature Writer

- Wrote various feature articles including student profile articles, web stories and press releases for the public relations department published on the College of the Arts website.
- Interviewed students, professors and department chairs for articles.

ATLANTIC PUBLISHING, Ocala, Florida February 2008-February 2009
Freelance Author

- Wrote two 65,000-word books (each completed in 90 days) titled *Off to College: Now What? a Practical Guide to Surviving and Succeeding Your First Year of College* and *101 Tips and Tricks to Get Your Baby to Sleep Through the Night*.
- Conducted interviews of experts to research books.

GEORGIA AIR NATIONAL GUARD, Robins AFB, Georgia January 2001-December 2007
Public Health Technician/NCOIC Infection Control/Aerospace Medicine Unit

- Prepared and administer training, tests and handouts for the Infection Control program.
- Maintained 95% compliance or higher for the hospital Infection Control program by ensuring newcomer training is accomplished within 60 days and all employees complete refresher training.
- Supervised Public Health Technicians and aided in their career development.

RISI, Atlanta, Georgia September 2006-April 2007
RISI, headquartered in Belgium, is the leading information provider for the global forest products industry.
Editorial/Production assistant

- Edited *Pulp & Paper*, an over 60-page monthly North American magazine, from features and briefs to advertisements and classifieds.

- Co-edited *Pulp & Paper International* (*PPI*) and the *IFPTA Journal*.
- Wrote, developed and edited original copy for various products and programs including: sales collateral, new product information and correspondence.
- Compiled information for and wrote the following sections: People News, Products News, Supplier News and Calendar for print and online publication.
- Tracked ads with database to ensure all were received and placed according to specifications.
- Corresponded with multiple departments including graphics design, sales, advertising, editorial directors, public relations and industry personnel for production and editorial planning.

MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL, Marietta, Georgia **May 2006-April 2007**
Copy Editor/Page Designer

- Edited daily wire and local stories in the Cherokee Tribune, Marietta Daily Journal and special edition sections for print and online media.
- Designed and laid out pages, including front pages, utilizing QuarkXPress software.
- Modified pictures using Adobe Photoshop and graphics using FreeHand.
- Performed quality control press checks as the last line of defense against errors.
- Collaborated with photography, advertising and the managing editors to ensure overall design quality.

FULTON COUNTY, Roswell, Georgia **July 2002-June 2006**
Environmental Health Specialist

- Conducted inspections of food facilities, swimming pools and tourist accommodations, consistently exceeding inspection frequency requirements.
- Created handouts for restaurant managers on food safety and Fulton County regulations.

CAREER PROGRESSION HIGHTLIGHTS

***ATLANTA* MAGAZINE, Atlanta, Georgia** **May 2006**
Freelance researcher/fact checker
REINHARDT HILTONIAN, Waleska, Georgia **December 2004-May 2006**
Editor-in-chief
***ATLANTA* MAGAZINE *CITY GUIDE*, Atlanta, Georgia** **December 2005-February 2006**
Assistant Editor
***ATLANTA* MAGAZINE, Atlanta, Georgia** **August 2005-December 2005**
Intern, writer, fact checker
U.S. AIR FORCE, Holloman AFB, New Mexico **April 1998-January 2001**
Public Health Technician, Active Duty

AWARDS

Air Force Achievement Medal
1998-2000 and 2001

EDUCATION

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia
Master of Arts in Professional Writing – in progress 2011
Reinhardt College, Waleska, Georgia
Bachelor of Arts in Communications – *summa cum laude*, May 2006
Community College of the Air Force
Associate's degree in Applied Science, Public Health Technology, August 2005